

FIVE WELLS MINISTRIES

---

# LEGACY MAKER CHAIN BREAKER

---

*Living a Life of "What ifs"*

Heal from the past. Break unhealthy cycles.  
Live with bold, Kingdom purpose.

**Protestant First — Jesus as Lord and Savior**

*Revised Edition — Ezra Standard*

A Second Act Starter by Kalan Paul

[TheSecondActMinistry.com](http://TheSecondActMinistry.com)

## Foreword

Every once in a while, a book comes along that doesn't just tell a story — it awakens something in yours. *Legacy Maker, Chain Breaker* is that kind of book.

This isn't a guide written from a mountaintop. It's a companion for the valleys, the crossroads, and the quiet moments when you wonder if your life still matters for something bigger. I have experienced and overcome: the pain of loss, the mess of rebuilding, the faith to adopt, the courage to start again, and the trust to follow God into the unknown.

What you'll find in these pages is more than wisdom — you'll find wounds that have been healed, risks that have been taken, and a heart that burns to see others walk in their purpose.

Whether you're 30 or 60, single or married, starting out or starting over, this message is for you. You have not missed your chance. You are not too late. God is still speaking, still moving, still calling.

Through relatable stories, Biblical parallels, and real-life encouragement, you'll be invited to ask one simple, life-altering question: "What if?"

And when you ask it with open hands and an open heart, get ready — because God loves to answer those who are bold enough to believe He still writes incredible Second Acts.

So read slowly. Reflect deeply. And most importantly — respond.

Because legacy isn't about what you leave behind. It's about who you become now. Let's go.

## **A Note to the Reader**

Before you begin, I want to tell you how this book was built and what I'm asking of you.

Every scripture reference in these pages has been studied in the original Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic and interpreted in its own literary, cultural, and historical context. I didn't attach verses to my stories to make them sound spiritual. I went to the text first and let it speak on its own terms. Where the text is clear, I've been clear. Where faithful scholars genuinely disagree, I've said so. Nothing has been cherry-picked for comfort or for fear. That's a standard I call the Ezra Standard, after Ezra 7:10 — a man who set his heart to study God's law, to practice it, and only then to teach it.

But here's what I'm asking of you: don't take my word for it.

In Acts 17:11, the Bereans received Paul's teaching with eagerness — and then they opened the scriptures every day to see if what he said was true. The text calls them noble for it. If an apostle's teaching was subject to verification by the text, then so is mine.

At the end of every chapter, you'll find a Berean Challenge — a specific prompt to go to the text yourself. Read the passage I referenced. Read the chapter around it. Ask whether what I said is what the text actually says in its own context. If it holds up, let it shape you. If it doesn't, trust the text over me.

I am not your source. The text is your source. I'm just a man who has been through enough to know that God's word holds, and I want you to discover that for yourself.

Let's go.

## Introduction

When I turned 50, something inside me shifted. It wasn't a midlife crisis — it was a holy invitation. A whisper in my spirit that said, "There's more." Not more success or noise or busyness — but more meaning, more surrender, more adventure with God.

That whisper became this book.

You're holding a collection of stories, lessons, prayers, and truths that come from real places — some painful, some joyful, all redeemed. I didn't write this because I have it all figured out. I wrote it because I've lived through enough to know that God writes the best stories when we let Him hold the pen.

This is for the person who feels like they started too late. For the one who thinks they're too messed up or too worn down. For the dreamer who has been afraid to dream again. And for the believer who knows deep down: God isn't finished yet.

Each chapter will invite you into reflection, action, and hope. You'll meet people from Scripture who weren't perfect but were powerfully used. You'll hear parts of my journey — from foster care adoption to business building, from breakdowns to breakthroughs. And most of all, you'll be reminded that you, too, are part of something eternal.

You were born with a Kingdom blueprint. God has a plan for your life that didn't expire when you made a mistake, got off track, or hit pause. It's still there — waiting for your yes.

This isn't just a book. It's a roadmap. It's a rally cry. It's a permission slip to begin again.

So wherever you are in your story — I pray these pages help you hear God's whisper and give you the courage to respond.

Let's chase the "what ifs."

Let's live the Second Act.

# Chapter 1: What If?

## The Text

Before I tell you my story, I want to show you something in Jeremiah 29 that most people never see — because most people only read verse 11.

*"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." — Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)*

That verse is on coffee mugs, dorm room walls, and graduation cards. But here's what the original context actually says — and it's far more powerful than a greeting card.

God spoke these words through the prophet Jeremiah to Jewish exiles in Babylon. They had been ripped from their homes, their temple was destroyed, and false prophets were telling them the exile would end quickly. God's actual message? It won't. Verse 10 says the exile will last seventy years. He tells them in verses 5-7 to build houses, plant gardens, marry, have children — settle in, because you're going to be here a while.

The Hebrew word for "plans" is machashavah — it means intentions, purposes, designs. And the promise of "welfare" (shalom) and "a future and a hope" comes in the middle of a seventy-year exile. God isn't promising an escape. He's promising that the exile itself is inside his purpose.

That changes everything. Because it means God's plan doesn't require comfortable circumstances. It operates through hard ones.

## My Story

What if your life was meant to be marked by "what if" faith instead of "if only" regret?

That question has shaped my entire journey. I didn't grow up with perfect stability or a clear blueprint for life. I was a child of many divorces. By the time I graduated high school, I had moved 22 times and changed schools 12 times. I even lived alone for a year at age 16. My story isn't neat — it's raw, full of detours, and yet undeniably shaped by grace.

At one point, I suffered a traumatic brain injury — one of three concussions I endured. I slurred my speech. My balance was off. My memory faltered. People looked at me and saw damage. But I began asking: What if God still had a purpose for me, even with my limitations?

Later, I would attend a one-year Bible school. I wasn't a scholar — in fact, I only ever managed to rack up 16 college credit hours. But I had a heart to work with

youth, and a hope that God could use even a broken past to build something meaningful.

I got married at 23. We lost a child to an ectopic pregnancy. A year and a half later, my wife left. I found myself divorced, disqualified — at least in my mind — and feeling like I was the least likely candidate for ministry. A college dropout. A wounded man. Another "what could have been."

But here's where God flipped the script.

Instead of asking "why me?" I started asking "what if?"

What if I'm not disqualified — I'm just getting started? What if failure isn't final? What if adoption could be our answer to infertility? What if I tried again — this time, with God fully at the center?

Years later, I met my wife Aimee — a woman who had grown up in the same town, in the same house, with the same dad working the same job her whole life. She was steady. She was focused. She had a degree in finance. And she met me — a wandering ENFP entrepreneur who had been through fire and still dared to dream.

Together, we asked: What if?

At age 39, we adopted four siblings from foster care — all on the same day. Ages 1, 2, 4, and 8. People said it was crazy. We called it obedience.

Soon after Aimee and I were married I started a contracting business. I refined systems. Built relationships. Found my niche. I discovered I wasn't just a dreamer — I was wired for marketing, sales, and people. God used those skills to build not just homes and concrete foundations — but freedom.

And then came the adventures: mission trips overseas, a calling to Northern Ireland, friendships with pastors and strangers who became family. We built memories, not just wealth. We lived "what if" one decision at a time.

This chapter — this mindset — is why this book exists.

Because when I look back at my life, I don't want people to say, "He played it safe." I want them to say, "He trusted God enough to go."

I believe God has a "what if" waiting for you, too.

### **Why the Real Meaning Is Better**

Here's why Jeremiah 29:11 in its actual context is better news than the version on the coffee mug. The popular reading says God has good plans for you — which sounds like a promise that things will go well. The actual text says God has good plans for you that operate through a seventy-year exile. That means your hardest season isn't evidence that God lost the plot. It's evidence that you're inside his plan, not outside it.

My life — the divorces, the brain injury, the loss, the rebuilding — wasn't a series of things God had to work around. According to this text, it was the very context in which his machashavah was operating. Not despite the exile. Through it.

### Reflection

- What fears or failures have kept you from asking "what if" in your own life?
- Where might God be inviting you to trust again, risk again, begin again?
- Have you been reading Jeremiah 29:11 as a promise of comfort — or a promise of purpose inside difficulty?

### Prayer

*Lord, I've been stuck in "if only" thinking — replaying the past instead of trusting You for the future. Help me embrace a "what if" faith. Help me say yes to Your plans, even when they feel risky or uncertain. And help me trust that Your machashavah — Your purposes — operate through the hard seasons, not just the easy ones. Use my story, Lord — not despite the broken parts, but through them. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### Berean Challenge

Read Jeremiah 29:1-14 — the full letter to the exiles, not just verse 11. Notice who God is speaking to, what he tells them to do while they wait, and how long he says the wait will last. Ask yourself: does knowing the full context make this promise weaker or stronger?

## Chapter 2: Chosen Love

### The Text

The New Testament uses a specific word for what God did when he made us his own. The Greek word is *huiothesia* — it appears five times in Paul's letters, and it means "the placing of a son." In Roman culture, adoption was a legal act that gave the adopted person full rights, full inheritance, and a new identity. The old family had no more claim. The new identity was permanent and irrevocable.

*"God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure." — Ephesians 1:5 (NLT)*

Paul chose *huiothesia* deliberately. His audience in Ephesus lived under Roman law and understood what adoption meant legally — it was more binding than biological birth, because it required intentional choice. You were born into a biological family by circumstance. You were adopted by decision.

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" — 1 John 3:1*

John's language is emphatic in the Greek. The phrase "and that is what we are" (*kai esmen*) was added for force — as if John anticipated someone reading "called children of God" and thinking it was just a title. No, he says. That is what we are. Not metaphor. Identity.

### My Story

Some people say love is a feeling. But love — real, transformational love — is a choice. And sometimes, it's the hardest choice of all.

When Aimee and I walked into that courthouse to adopt four siblings from foster care, we were choosing something radical. We weren't naïve. We knew it would be hard. We were bringing kids into our lives who had experienced trauma, uncertainty, and instability. But we also knew this: love has the power to rewrite stories.

There's a moment when the judge signs the papers, looks up, and says, "It is final." That day, four children got a new last name. They got a new identity. And they got a family.

I can't help but think of how closely that mirrors what happens when we come to faith in Jesus. Scripture says we are adopted into God's family. We get a new name. A new identity. A new inheritance. Not because we earned it — but because He chose us.

As an adoptive dad, I've seen this love up close. It's patient. It's messy. It's resilient. And it changes everything.

God didn't wait for us to be perfect before He called us His own. He met us in our brokenness. He chose us while we were still running. And He sealed our adoption with His Spirit.

The enemy loves to whisper lies: "You don't belong. You're not enough. You're too damaged." But our Father's voice is louder. He says, "You're mine. You're chosen. You're loved."

And just like our kids had to learn to trust that our love wasn't going anywhere, maybe you do too. Maybe today is the day you let your guard down and believe it's real. That you are wanted. That you belong.

That you've been chosen.

### **Bible Character: Mephibosheth**

Mephibosheth was crippled, hidden away in a place called Lo-debar — a name that means "no pasture," a place of nothing. He was the grandson of King Saul, living in fear that David would kill him to eliminate rival claims to the throne. That was the normal practice of ancient kings.

But David had made a covenant with Jonathan, Mephibosheth's father. And in 2 Samuel 9, David seeks Mephibosheth out — not to destroy him, but to restore him. He gives him back all of Saul's land, assigns servants to work it, and says, "You shall eat at my table always." The Hebrew word *tamid* — always, continually — means this wasn't a one-time dinner invitation. It was permanent inclusion.

Mephibosheth didn't earn his place. He was chosen because of covenant love — a love made to someone else (Jonathan) that flowed down to him. Just like us. We are chosen because of a covenant made between the Father and the Son that flows down to us.

### **Reflection**

- Where have you struggled to believe that you are truly loved and chosen by God?
- How might understanding the legal permanence of *hiothesia* — Roman adoption — change how you see your identity in Christ?

### **Prayer**

*Father, thank You that I am not an outsider. I am not forgotten. I am Yours — not by accident but by decision. Help me to receive Your love fully — not just in theory, but in truth. Help me to walk in my identity as a chosen child, and to extend that same love to those who feel unseen. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Berean Challenge

Read Ephesians 1:3-14 — the full sentence (in Greek it's one long sentence) that describes everything God has done in Christ. Then read 2 Samuel 9 in full. Notice what Mephibosheth says about himself in verse 8 and what David does anyway. Ask: does covenant love wait for the recipient to feel worthy?

## Chapter 3: Burnout, Breakdowns, and Breakthroughs

### The Text

In 1 Kings 19, Elijah has just called down fire from heaven on Mount Carmel, defeated 450 prophets of Baal, and outrun a chariot in the rain. By any measure, he just experienced the greatest victory of his life. And in the very next scene, he runs for his life from Jezebel's threat, collapses under a broom tree, and asks God to let him die.

The text doesn't explain this as a spiritual failure. It presents it as what happened next. The Hebrew narrative simply records it — the same man, the same faith, the same prophet. Victory and despair lived in the same chapter of his life.

What God does in response is remarkable. He doesn't rebuke Elijah. He doesn't give him a lecture on faith. He sends an angel with bread and water — twice — and lets him sleep. The Hebrew word for what the angel does is *naga* — to touch, to reach out to. God's first response to Elijah's burnout is physical provision and rest. Only after Elijah has eaten and slept does God speak — and even then, it's not a booming voice from the fire or the earthquake. It's a *qol demamah daqqah* — a sound of thin silence, often translated "a still small voice."

*"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." — Matthew 11:28*

Jesus' invitation in Matthew 11:28 uses the Greek word *deute* — come here, come now. And the word for rest is *anapauo* — to cause to cease, to give intermission. It's not passive relaxation. It's active relief from labor. The context matters: Jesus has just finished rebuking cities that saw miracles and didn't repent (verses 20–24), and then he prays a prayer of thanksgiving that God reveals truth to the humble, not the wise (verses 25–27). The invitation to rest comes immediately after — directed at people who are weary from religious performance and burdened by systems that demand more than they give.

### My Story

We don't often talk about burnout in Christian circles — not honestly, anyway. But let's face it: trying to carry the weight of life, faith, family, and calling without support will crush even the strongest shoulders. I've been there — not just tired, but empty. Not just discouraged, but ready to quit.

There were seasons I was doing all the right things on the outside — leading, providing, showing up — but inside, I was unraveling. The pressure of trying to be "enough" was relentless. And even though I loved God, I often felt like I was doing it all alone.

That's when I realized: sometimes, a breakdown is God's invitation to a breakthrough.

In one of my lowest seasons, I stepped away from what I thought I was "supposed" to be doing. I slowed down. I listened. I let myself rest — which didn't feel spiritual at all. But in the quiet, God started to rebuild things in me that had worn thin. He reminded me that my worth wasn't tied to my output. That He never asked me to hustle for His approval.

And slowly, the fog lifted.

I began to notice things again — like beauty, and breath, and joy. I laughed more. I reconnected with my family. I took walks. I prayed short, honest prayers instead of polished ones. And from that place of rawness, God met me. Not to scold, but to restore.

If you're in that place now — if your soul feels scorched and your passion feels buried — know this: you're not broken. You're being invited into something deeper.

Burnout isn't the end. It's a redirection.

Breakdowns can become the soil for breakthrough.

But you have to be willing to stop striving long enough to hear God say: "I never left. And I'm not disappointed in you."

## Reflection

- Have you experienced burnout in your faith, work, or relationships? What were the signs?
- What would it look like to rest instead of strive in this season?
- Does it change anything to know that God's first response to Elijah's collapse was bread, water, and sleep — not a rebuke?

## Prayer

*Jesus, I'm weary. I've tried to carry too much for too long. Teach me to come to You — not to perform, but to rest. Remind me that You're not looking for perfection. You're offering presence. Heal the places in me that feel drained, and show me how to walk forward with peace. Like Elijah under the broom tree, let me receive what You're offering before I try to keep going. In Your name, Amen.*

## Berean Challenge

Read 1 Kings 19:1-18 in full. Notice the sequence: Elijah's fear, his request to die, God's provision of food and rest, the forty-day journey, and then the encounter at Horeb. Pay attention to what God asks him — and what God doesn't say. Then read Matthew 11:20-30 and notice what comes right before the invitation to rest.

## Chapter 4: Building with Purpose

### The Text

Nehemiah wasn't a builder by trade — he was a cupbearer to the king of Persia, a position of high trust in a foreign court. When he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and its gates burned, the text says he sat down, wept, mourned, fasted, and prayed for days (Nehemiah 1:4). His first response wasn't a plan. It was grief.

What follows in Nehemiah 2-6 is one of the most detailed accounts of a building project in all of scripture. And it's worth noting what the text actually records: opposition from Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem who mocked, threatened, and plotted against the work. The builders worked with a tool in one hand and a weapon in the other (Nehemiah 4:17). The project was completed in fifty-two days — and even the enemies recognized that "this work had been accomplished with the help of our God" (Nehemiah 6:16).

*"Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain." — Psalm 127:1*

Psalm 127 is wisdom literature — a Song of Ascents, sung by pilgrims traveling to Jerusalem. The Hebrew word for "vain" is shav — emptiness, worthlessness. It's the same word used in the third commandment: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." The psalm isn't saying human effort doesn't matter. It's saying human effort without God's involvement produces shav — emptiness that looks like something but holds nothing. The genre is wisdom poetry, which means this is an observation about how life works, not a promise that every God-centered project will succeed on your timeline.

### My Story

There's something powerful about building — not just homes or businesses, but lives, families, and futures. After adopting our four kids, I found myself not only creating a home for them, but building a home for God's children that hopefully launches adults with a heart for God.

I didn't come from a background of construction. But I had a deep desire to provide security and create something lasting. So I learned. I asked questions. I took risks. I said, "What if I could do this?"

That "what if" became a reality — not just once, but many times over. We built a home. Then another. And another. Eventually, I transitioned into concrete contracting and found my rhythm. It gave us freedom, stability, and the ability to serve others with excellence.

But here's what I've learned: the most meaningful thing you'll ever build is people.

God didn't just give me skills for business — He gave me a vision to build lives. My kids, my marriage, my team, my community. Brick by brick, decision by decision, we're all constructing something with our time and talents. The question is: what are we building, and who is it for?

Jesus talked about two builders — one who built on sand and one on rock. The storms came to both, but only one house stood firm. That's because the foundation matters more than the facade.

## Reflection

- What are you building with your time, energy, and focus?
- Are you building on the foundation of God's word or chasing temporary goals?
- Nehemiah faced opposition at every stage of building. What opposition are you facing — and are you still building?

## Prayer

*Lord, I don't want to build a life that looks good but doesn't last. Teach me to build with purpose — to invest in what matters and to trust You as the true foundation. Like Nehemiah, help me grieve what's broken, plan with wisdom, and build even when the opposition is loud. Help me steward the skills and opportunities You've given me for something greater than myself. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Berean Challenge

Read Nehemiah 1-2 and notice the sequence: grief, prayer, planning, action. Then read Psalm 127 as a wisdom poem — not a promise, but an observation. Ask: what in my life am I building with shav — effort that looks productive but has no foundation?

## Chapter 5: When Doors Close

### The Text

In Acts 16:6–10, Paul and his team are on their second missionary journey. They try to preach in the province of Asia — the Holy Spirit says no. They try to enter Bithynia — the Spirit of Jesus does not allow them. The text gives no explanation for why. No reason is offered. Just: no.

Then Paul has a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over and help us." And the team immediately sets out — because they concluded that God had called them to preach the gospel there. That redirection opened up the gospel to Europe. Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Athens — all of it traces back to two closed doors and one vision.

What's worth noting under the Ezra Standard is what the text does not say. It does not say the closed doors were punishment. It does not say Paul lacked faith. It does not even say the ministry in Asia and Bithynia was bad — in fact, the gospel eventually reached both regions. The timing was wrong, not the destination.

The whole counsel requires acknowledging that scripture also records closed doors that were consequences of disobedience. In Numbers 14:39–45, after Israel refused to enter the promised land when God said go, they then tried to enter when God said stop. The door was closed because they had already rejected God's timing. They went anyway, and they were defeated. Not every closed door is gentle redirection. Some are the result of choices already made.

Honest discernment means asking: is this door closed because God is redirecting me, or because I'm facing consequences I need to sit in? The text supports both realities.

### My Story

It's easy to talk about faith when everything is falling into place. But what about when things fall apart? When doors that seemed God-ordained suddenly slam shut? When prayers go unanswered, or worse, seem ignored?

I've had seasons like that — moments when I thought the next step was clear, only to watch the path vanish. Jobs lost. Relationships strained. Financial pressure. Dreams that felt right but didn't work out the way I hoped.

It's in those moments that your faith gets tested. Not the faith that believes for blessings, but the faith that keeps trusting when blessings are delayed or denied.

I remember one business I had high hopes for. It felt like the culmination of years of effort and prayer. But despite all the signs pointing toward success, it crumbled. I was angry. Confused. Embarrassed. I thought, "God, did I hear You wrong?"

What I've learned since then is this: closed doors are not always signs of abandonment. They can be divine redirection. Sometimes God shuts the door not to punish us, but to protect us or prepare us.

Looking back, I can see how that closed door led me to something far better — more fulfilling, more aligned with how He made me. But I wouldn't have found it if I kept trying to pry open what He had shut.

Faith doesn't mean every door opens. Faith means trusting the One who holds the keys.

### Reflection

- Are there doors in your life that closed unexpectedly? How did you respond?
- What new path might God be inviting you to walk through instead?
- Is there a door you're trying to force open that God may have closed — and do you need to ask honestly whether it's redirection or consequence?

### Prayer

*Father, I don't always understand why doors close, but I trust that You are still working. Help me not to force what You've finished. Give me the honesty to discern whether a closed door is Your protection or my consequence — and the humility to respond rightly either way. Give me peace in the waiting and courage to walk through the new doors You open. Lead me in paths of purpose, even when they look different than I planned. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### Berean Challenge

Read Acts 16:6-15 and notice how little explanation the text gives for the closed doors. Then read Numbers 14:39-45 and notice the difference — a closed door that came from disobedience, not redirection. Ask: how do I discern the difference in my own life?

## Chapter 6: Created for Connection

### The Text

In Acts 2:42–47, Luke describes the earliest church community. They devoted themselves to four things: the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayer. The Greek word translated "fellowship" is *koinōnia* — and it means far more than gathering in the same room. It means shared participation, common life, partnership. In verse 44, they "had all things in common" — the Greek *koina* means held jointly. This wasn't a commune. It was a community where your need was my responsibility and my abundance was your provision.

The word "devoted" in verse 42 is *proskarterountes* — to persist in, to be steadfastly attentive to. This wasn't casual. They were doggedly committed to shared life. And the result, in verses 46–47, was daily presence in the temple and in homes, sharing meals with glad and generous hearts, and the Lord adding to their number daily.

*"Let us not give up meeting together... but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching." — Hebrews 10:25*

The writer of Hebrews uses the Greek *episynagōgē* — the assembling together — and pairs it with *parakaleo* — to come alongside, to encourage, to exhort. The instruction isn't just to show up. It's to actively build one another up in the context of gathered community.

### My Story

In a world full of digital noise and surface-level relationships, real connection feels more valuable than ever. I've learned this through the ups and downs of parenting, marriage, friendship, and ministry. We were never meant to do life alone. We were created for community.

When Aimee and I adopted our four children, we quickly realized that connection wasn't automatic — it had to be built. Layer by layer. Through laughter, patience, discipline, and a whole lot of grace. Connection takes time, intention, and presence.

And honestly, it can feel risky. To connect deeply is to be seen. It's to let people into the mess — not just the highlight reel. But that's where the real beauty lives.

I've experienced that same truth in my faith journey. There are seasons I've drifted — not out of rebellion, but out of busyness or distraction. But God never stopped reaching for me. His desire is always connection, not performance.

When I think about what's sustained me through trials, losses, and victories, it's been the people who showed up — the ones who saw past the image and into the heart. Those who didn't fix me, but sat with me. Who reminded me I wasn't alone. And that's the heart of God. He doesn't shout at us from a distance. He draws near.

### **Bible Character: Ruth**

Ruth chose connection when she could've walked away. She told Naomi, "Where you go, I'll go. Your people will be my people. Your God, my God" (Ruth 1:16). The Hebrew word *dabaq* in Ruth 1:14 — translated "clung to" — is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 for a husband clinging to his wife. Ruth's commitment to Naomi was covenantal in its intensity. She stayed, loved, and built a future from loyalty and faithfulness. Her story reminds us that deep connection leads to deep legacy.

### **Reflection**

- Are you living connected, or just surrounded?
- Who has God placed in your life that you're being called to pursue with greater depth or consistency?
- What's the difference between the *koinōnia* described in Acts 2 and the "community" you currently experience?

### **Prayer**

*God, thank You that You never stop pursuing connection with me. Teach me to slow down, be present, and build meaningful relationships with others. Help me love deeply, forgive freely, and stay committed — even when it's hard. Move me from proximity to *koinōnia*. Use my connections to reflect Your heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### **Berean Challenge**

Read Acts 2:42-47 slowly and list the specific practices described. Then honestly compare that list with your current experience of Christian community. Where are the gaps? What would it take to close one of them this week?

# Chapter 7: The Power of Obedience

## The Text

In Genesis 12:1, God says to Abram: "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you." The Hebrew word *lekh-lekha* is unusual — it's an intensified form that essentially means "go for yourself" or "go to yourself." God isn't just telling Abram to relocate. He's telling him to leave behind everything that defined him — country, clan, father's house — and step into an identity that doesn't exist yet.

Hebrews 11:8 adds a crucial detail: "By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going." The obedience preceded the knowledge. He left before he knew the destination.

The whole counsel of Abraham's life requires honesty about what came after. His obedience was real — and so were his failures. He lied about Sarah being his wife. Twice (Genesis 12:10-20, Genesis 20:1-18). He took Hagar at Sarah's suggestion rather than waiting on God's promise (Genesis 16). The text does not present Abraham as a man of flawless faith. It presents him as a man who obeyed imperfectly and whose obedience God honored anyway.

That distinction matters. If Abraham had to be perfect for God to use him, none of us qualify. But the text shows us that God works through people who say yes — even when they also say yes to things they shouldn't.

## My Story

There's a unique kind of courage that comes from simply saying "yes" to God — even when you don't know where it will lead. Obedience isn't flashy. It rarely feels comfortable. But it is powerful.

Some of the most pivotal moments in my life began with a small, quiet nudge from God. A whisper. A sense that He was inviting me into something, even when I didn't have all the details. Like the time I felt led to reach out to a pastor in Northern Ireland — a man I'd never met. Or when my wife and I sensed it was time to travel, not just for fun, but with purpose.

One of the most unexpected "yesses" was saying yes to go to Europe — on mission, with no agenda except to encourage and listen. I didn't have a five-point plan. I just had a willingness to obey.

That obedience led to friendships, divine appointments, and ministry moments I could've never planned on my own. The fruit didn't come from striving — it came from surrender.

Obedience is often less about knowing where you're going and more about knowing who you're following.

God doesn't need your perfection — He just needs your permission. When you say yes, He does the rest.

### Reflection

- Is there something God's been prompting you to do, but you've been hesitating?
- What fears or uncertainties have kept you from saying yes?
- Does knowing that Abraham failed significantly after his great obedience make his story more or less encouraging to you?

### Prayer

*Lord, I want to say yes to You — even when I don't have all the answers. Give me faith like Abraham — not a perfect faith, but a faith that moves when You say go. Help me to trust Your voice more than my fear, and to believe that You work through imperfect obedience. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### Berean Challenge

Read Genesis 12:1-9 for the obedience, then Genesis 12:10-20 for the failure that followed almost immediately. Ask: does God's faithfulness to the promise depend on Abraham's consistency, or on God's own character? What does that mean for you?

## Chapter 8: Memories Over Materials

### The Text

In Luke 10:38–42, Jesus enters the home of Martha and Mary. Martha is distracted with much serving — the Greek word is *periespaō*, to be pulled or dragged in different directions. She comes to Jesus frustrated: "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone?" Jesus responds: "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, and it will not be taken away from her."

The Greek for "good portion" is *agathen merida* — the better part, the better share. Jesus isn't condemning service or work. He's making a distinction between what can be taken away and what cannot. Martha's preparations would be consumed and forgotten. Mary's presence at Jesus' feet produced something that, as Jesus says, "will not be taken away."

*"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." — Matthew 6:19–21*

Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount isn't anti-material. It's anti-misplacement. The word for "store up" is *thēsaurizō* — to treasure, to heap up. And his conclusion in verse 21 is diagnostic, not just prescriptive: where your treasure is, there your heart will be. The location of your investment reveals the location of your heart. It doesn't just follow — it leads.

### My Story

When I look back at the most meaningful moments in my life, they aren't tied to things — they're tied to experiences, to people, to the moments where time slowed down and connection took root.

Early in our marriage, Aimee and I made a decision. We would prioritize memories over materials. That didn't mean we didn't work or steward resources — we did. But our aim was to create a life filled with moments we wouldn't trade, not just stuff we could accumulate.

We traveled overseas, not just to check destinations off a list, but to encounter God's people and creation. We took our kids on adventures, exposed them to different cultures, and sowed into their hearts a love for what matters — people, presence, purpose.

We've had homes, cars, and toys — some of it came and went. But the memories we made? No one can take those. They've shaped who we are.

I believe that's part of God's heart too. He's not impressed by what we collect. He's moved by how we love, who we serve, and what we do with the time we're given.

Jesus didn't own much in the way of material goods, but He gave everything in terms of presence. He walked with people. Sat at tables. Wept, laughed, healed. He gave memories that became the testimony of the disciples' lives.

### Reflection

- What do you want your kids, friends, or spouse to remember most about life with you?
- Where might you be prioritizing stuff over stories?
- If where your treasure is reveals where your heart is — what does your spending, your time, and your attention say about the location of your heart?

### Prayer

*Lord, help me to live for what lasts. Teach me to invest my time, energy, and heart into what matters most — people, presence, and purpose. Like Mary, help me choose the portion that cannot be taken away. Help me create memories that reflect Your love, not just accumulate things that fade. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### Berean Challenge

Read Luke 10:38-42 and Matthew 6:19-21. In both passages, Jesus contrasts what is temporary with what is permanent. Ask yourself honestly: what am I investing in that will be consumed and forgotten, and what am I investing in that will outlast me?

## Chapter 9: Healing the Father Wound

### The Text

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, the first word he gave them was Abba's formal equivalent: Pater — Father. "Our Father, who is in heaven" (Matthew 6:9). But Paul takes it further in Romans 8:15: "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, 'Abba! Father!'"

The word Abba is Aramaic — it's an intimate, familial address. Not the casual "daddy" it's sometimes reduced to in popular teaching, but not the distant "sir" either. Scholars like Joachim Jeremias argued it was unique to Jesus' usage; later scholars like James Barr noted it was common in Jewish prayer. What's not debated is the intimacy it communicates — Abba is the word a child uses with a father who is present, trusted, and safe.

Paul pairs Abba with the Greek *huiothesia* — adoption. The Spirit of adoption is what enables us to address God with that kind of intimacy. And Paul says this Spirit is the opposite of the "spirit of slavery" that produces fear. The fatherhood of God in the text is not a projection of human fatherhood onto God. It's a revelation of what fatherhood was supposed to be — and for many, it's the healing of what fatherhood was not.

*"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!" — 1 John 3:1*

### My Story

For years, I carried a wound I didn't know how to name — the ache of a father's absence. My dad died in a car wreck just a week before my 13th birthday. That kind of loss doesn't just leave a gap — it shapes how you see the world, yourself, and even God.

When you grow up without a father — or with a fractured image of one — it's easy to project that brokenness onto your Heavenly Father. I wrestled with questions like: Am I really loved? Am I seen? Am I safe to trust?

But over time, God didn't just show up as Lord — He revealed Himself as Father. A Father who saw the scared, unsure, searching young man inside of me and called me His.

Adopting my kids gave me a glimpse of this love from the other side. I began to understand the tenderness, the patience, the fierce protectiveness of a father's heart. And I also saw the struggles — the triggers, the walls, the testing of trust — that come from kids who've had to survive without steady love.

Healing the father wound isn't a one-time moment. It's a journey. But it starts with a revelation: God is not a reflection of your earthly father. He is the perfection of fatherhood. And His love is the anchor your soul has been aching for.

You don't have to earn it. You don't have to fear it. You just have to receive it.

### **Bible Character: Joseph**

Joseph could've walked away when Mary told him she was pregnant — but he chose to stay. He protected, provided, and parented Jesus with integrity and obedience. Though we don't have many words from him in Scripture, Joseph's quiet strength and faithfulness reflect the Father-heart of God (Matthew 1-2).

### **Reflection**

- In what ways has your relationship with your earthly father impacted your view of God?
- What might God be inviting you to receive from Him as your perfect Father?
- When you read Abba in Romans 8:15, what emotion surfaces — comfort, resistance, longing, or something else?

### **Prayer**

*Father God — Abba — thank You for being the perfect parent. Heal the places in me that have been shaped by pain, loss, or confusion. Show me what it means to be loved by You — fully, freely, unconditionally. Replace the spirit of fear with the Spirit of adoption. Help me live from that identity and offer that same love to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### **Berean Challenge**

Read Romans 8:12-17 and notice the contrast Paul draws between the spirit of slavery/fear and the Spirit of adoption. Then read Matthew 6:9-13 — the Lord's Prayer — and sit with the fact that Jesus' first instruction was to address God as Father. What does that opening word assume about the relationship?

## Chapter 10: Your Gifts Still Matter

### The Text

In Exodus 4:1-5, Moses stands at the burning bush making excuses. He's already told God he's not eloquent (the Hebrew *kaved peh* means "heavy of mouth" — possibly a speech impediment). God's response isn't to fix the limitation. It's to ask a question: "What is that in your hand?" (Exodus 4:2).

Moses is holding a *matteh* — a shepherd's staff. An ordinary tool of an ordinary trade. God doesn't replace it with something supernatural. He uses what's already there. That staff would part the Red Sea, bring water from rock, and be raised over battlefields. The extraordinary was done through the ordinary, offered back to God.

*"Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms." — 1 Peter 4:10*

Peter's word for "various forms" is the Greek *poikilos* — many-colored, varied, diverse. God's grace doesn't come in one shape. It comes in as many shapes as there are people to carry it. And the word for "stewards" is *oikonomoi* — household managers. You don't own your gifts. You manage them on behalf of the owner.

The honest uncertainty here is important: the text does not promise that your gifts will produce visible, measurable results on your timeline. The servants in the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) were not all given the same amount. They were all expected to be faithful with what they received. Faithfulness, not productivity, is the measure.

### My Story

For a long time, I believed that if I didn't get things "right" in my early years, I'd somehow miss my window. That if I didn't graduate college, follow a traditional path, or achieve certain milestones, then my usefulness in God's kingdom would be limited.

That lie held me hostage.

But here's what I've discovered: God doesn't operate on the world's timelines or grading scales. He never shelves someone because they've taken a detour. In fact, He specializes in reactivating purpose in people who thought their time had passed.

Maybe you've downplayed your gifts because they don't look like someone else's. Or maybe you've buried them under years of disappointment, fear, or failure.

But friend — your gifts still matter.

The creativity. The compassion. The insight. The wisdom. The way you see the world. The experiences you've lived through. God weaves it all together — not in spite of your past, but through it.

You don't need a stage or spotlight to be impactful. You just need to be available.

When you give God your gifts, He multiplies them — not always in ways you expect, but always in ways that matter.

## Reflection

- What gifts, passions, or experiences have you discounted in yourself?
- What would it look like to offer them to God again — without comparison or hesitation?
- What's in your hand right now — and are you offering it?

## Prayer

*Lord, thank You that my gifts still matter — even if they've been dormant or undeveloped. Show me what You've placed in my hands, like the matteh in Moses' grip. Help me to serve boldly, creatively, and faithfully — not as an owner of my gifts but as a steward. Use my story, my skills, and even my scars for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Berean Challenge

Read Exodus 3:1-4:17 — the full burning bush encounter, including every excuse Moses makes and every response God gives. Then read 1 Peter 4:7-11 for the context around the stewardship of gifts. Ask: am I making Moses-style excuses about what's in my hand?

# Chapter 11: Learning to Listen

## The Text

In 1 Samuel 3, the boy Samuel is serving in the temple under Eli. God calls Samuel's name in the night — and Samuel doesn't recognize the voice. He runs to Eli three times thinking the old priest called him. It takes Eli to discern what's happening and instruct Samuel: "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'"

The Hebrew *shama* — translated "listening" — means more than auditory reception. It means to hear with the intent to respond, to hear and obey. When Samuel says "your servant is listening," he's not describing a passive state. He's describing a posture of readiness and submission.

What's striking about this narrative is that Samuel needed help recognizing God's voice. He didn't have an innate ability to identify it. Verse 7 says explicitly: "Samuel did not yet know the LORD; the word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him." The recognition came through practice, guidance, and community — Eli had to teach him what was happening.

*"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." — John 10:27*

In John 10, Jesus is distinguishing his true followers from those who reject him. The Greek *akouo* (listen/hear) and *akoloutheo* (follow) are paired — hearing leads to following. The context is identity and allegiance: Jesus' sheep recognize his voice because they belong to him. This is less a teaching on the spiritual discipline of quiet time and more a statement about the relationship between the shepherd and the flock. You hear because you're his. And the hearing produces movement — following.

## My Story

One of the most underrated spiritual disciplines is listening. In our noisy world, it's easy to fill every space with sound — podcasts, music, notifications, opinions. But transformation often begins in silence.

I've had moments in life when I was desperate for answers. I wanted clarity, direction, assurance. But instead of a booming voice or flashing sign, God gave me stillness. And in that stillness, He spoke — not always with words, but with peace, conviction, or a sense of timing I couldn't explain.

Listening doesn't come naturally to most of us — especially those of us wired to take action (hello, fellow ENFPs!). But over the years, I've learned that slowing down enough to hear God is one of the most fruitful things I can do.

When we truly listen — to God, to our spouse, to our kids, to our community — we learn what's under the surface. We stop reacting and start responding. We move from assumption to discernment.

God's voice is often quiet, not because He's distant, but because He wants us close.

The greatest breakthroughs in my journey didn't come from doing more — they came from discerning more. And that only happened when I tuned in, turned down the volume, and asked: "Lord, what are You saying right now?"

## Reflection

- What noise in your life might be crowding out God's voice?
- When was the last time you paused long enough to truly listen?
- Samuel needed Eli to help him recognize God's voice. Who in your life serves that role — and are you listening to them?

## Prayer

*Father, teach me to listen — to shama — to hear with the intent to respond. Quiet the distractions around and within me so I can hear Your voice clearly. Like Samuel, give me people who help me recognize when You're speaking. And give me the courage to respond: "Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening." In Jesus' name, Amen.*

## Berean Challenge

Read 1 Samuel 3:1-21 in full. Notice that Samuel needed three attempts and Eli's guidance to recognize God's voice. Then read John 10:1-18 — the full Good Shepherd passage — and notice that hearing the shepherd's voice is about belonging, not technique. Ask: am I trying to learn a listening method, or am I deepening a relationship?

## Chapter 12: Don't Quit Now

### The Text

In Jeremiah 20:7-9, the prophet reaches his breaking point. He accuses God of deceiving him. He says the word of the LORD has brought him nothing but reproach and derision all day long. He decides he's done — he will not speak in God's name anymore. And then: "But his word was in my heart like a burning fire, shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it in, and I could not."

The Hebrew word for "burning" is ba'ar — to burn, to consume. And etzem means bone — the deepest, most structural part of the body. Jeremiah isn't describing inspiration. He's describing an inability to stop, even when every external circumstance told him to quit. The call had gone into his bones.

*"Let us not grow weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." — Galatians 6:9*

Paul's word for "weary" is enkakeō — to lose heart, to become faint. And "at the proper time" is kairos idios — in the fitting, appointed season. Paul doesn't say when. He says it will happen at the right time — and the condition is that we do not give up. The Greek mē eklyomenoi means do not become unstrung, like a bow losing its tension.

The whole counsel here requires acknowledging what Ecclesiastes 3 teaches: there is a time for everything. A time to plant and a time to uproot. A time to tear down and a time to build. Not every season calls for the same response. Sometimes the faithful choice is perseverance. Sometimes it's release. The difference requires discernment, not just determination.

### My Story

There's a point in every journey when quitting feels easier than continuing. When the excitement wears off, when the results don't come quickly, when the critics get loud or the silence feels deafening — that's when many walk away.

I've been there more than once. Ministering felt heavy. Parenting felt overwhelming. Business felt stagnant. The vision that once burned bright looked dim. I'd wonder, "Is this really worth it?"

But every time I wanted to quit, God reminded me: He wasn't finished.

Breakthrough often lives on the other side of "I'm done." That's when faith kicks in — not the kind that dances in celebration, but the kind that digs in when no one's clapping. The kind that says, "Even if I don't see it yet, I'll keep moving forward."

Maybe you're there now. You've put in the work, stayed faithful, but you're tired. Discouraged. Wondering if it's making a difference. Let me say this clearly: Don't quit. Not now.

Your obedience matters. Your perseverance matters. Your faithfulness in the small things is building something bigger than you can see.

### Reflection

- What area of your life feels like it's not producing fruit right now?
- What would it look like to stay faithful even without immediate results?
- Is there anything in your life where the faithful response might actually be release rather than perseverance — and how would you discern the difference?

### Prayer

*God, some days I feel like giving up. The road is long, and the results seem slow. But like Jeremiah, Your word is a fire in my bones that won't let me quit. Give me the discernment to know when to persevere and when to release. Give me strength to stay faithful and courage to press on. Help me trust that You will bring a harvest in Your kairos — Your appointed time. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### Berean Challenge

Read Jeremiah 20:7-18 — the full lament, including the parts that are deeply uncomfortable. Then read Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 and sit with the tension: there is a time to hold on and a time to let go. Ask: how do I discern which season I'm in?

## Chapter 13: Redeeming Regret

### The Text

In John 21:15-19, the resurrected Jesus finds Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Peter has denied Jesus three times. And now Jesus asks him three times: "Do you love me?" The repetition is not accidental — it mirrors the three denials. Each question undoes a denial. Each response rebuilds what was broken.

But there's a tension in the Greek that most English translations flatten. The first two times, Jesus asks using the word *agapao* — the highest, most self-giving love. Peter responds both times with *phileō* — brotherly affection, friendship love. He won't claim the higher word. The third time, Jesus drops down to Peter's word and asks with *phileō* — "Are you even my friend?" And Peter, grieved, responds, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I *phileō* you."

Jesus meets Peter where Peter actually is — not where Peter should be. And then he reinstates him: "Feed my sheep." The calling isn't withdrawn because of the failure. It's restored through honest reckoning with it.

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." — Romans 8:28*

The Greek *synergei* means to work together with — all things cooperate toward something. And "good" (*agathos*) is defined in verse 29: to be conformed to the image of Christ. The "good" is not comfort, happiness, or the erasure of consequences. It's transformation. God works all things — including failure and regret — toward the purpose of making you look more like Jesus.

The whole counsel also requires honesty: redemption doesn't always erase consequences. David was forgiven after Bathsheba, but the child still died, and violence never departed from his house (2 Samuel 12:10-14). Peter was restored, but church tradition holds that he carried the weight of that denial for the rest of his life — and according to Jesus' own words in John 21:18-19, Peter's faithfulness would eventually cost him his life. Redemption is real. So are consequences. The text holds both.

### My Story

If we're honest, we've all got things we wish we could undo — words we shouldn't have said, opportunities we missed, seasons we coasted through instead of showing up. Regret has a way of whispering lies: "You blew it. It's too late. You're disqualified."

I've lived long enough and walked with enough people to know: regret is common, but it doesn't have to be permanent.

One of the most powerful truths I've come to embrace is this — God doesn't waste anything. Not even our mess-ups. In fact, it's often in the very places we feel the most ashamed that He does His most redemptive work.

God isn't just the God of second chances — He's the God of second acts.

Think about it: many of the most impactful people in scripture had major regrets. Yet their stories didn't end with failure — they ended with faith. Because our worst moments don't define us. What we do next does.

Your past can become a platform. Your scars can lead to someone else's healing. When surrendered, regret becomes fertilizer for growth.

I personally relate the most to Peter and based on what we know about him its likely I would have acted similarly, the good and the bad.

## Reflection

- What's one regret you've held onto that God may be inviting you to release?
- How might your story of redemption bring hope to someone else?
- Can you sit with the tension that God redeems regret and consequences may remain — and find hope in both?

## Prayer

*Jesus, You know the things I wish I could undo. But You also see beyond them. Like Peter on the shore, meet me where I actually am — not where I should be. Help me release regret and receive Your redemption. Use my story — even the hard parts — to bring hope and healing to others. Thank You that my failures are never final with You, even when the consequences linger. In Your name, Amen.*

## Berean Challenge

Read John 21:15-19 slowly and pay attention to the shift from agapao to phileō. Then read 2 Samuel 12:1-14 and notice that David's forgiveness was real and the consequences were also real. Ask: can I hold redemption and consequence together without letting either one cancel the other?

## Chapter 14: Legacy Maker, Chain Breaker

### The Text

The book of Esther is one of the most complex narratives in scripture — and one of the most honest. God's name never appears in the Hebrew text. There is no direct speech from God, no vision, no prophetic word. Yet the entire book is a story of providential deliverance.

Esther was an orphan, raised by her cousin Mordecai, living in exile in Persia. She was taken into the king's harem — not a fairy tale, but a reality of life under foreign power. When Haman plots to destroy the Jewish people, Mordecai tells Esther:

*"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" — Esther 4:14*

Mordecai's words contain a remarkable tension. He says deliverance will come regardless — "from another place" if not from Esther. God's plan doesn't depend on her. But she has an opportunity to be part of it. The phrase "who knows" (*mi yodea* in Hebrew) is not certainty. It's faith under uncertainty. Mordecai isn't claiming prophetic knowledge. He's discerning providence and inviting Esther to step into it.

Faithful scholars genuinely disagree about how to read Esther's faith and agency in this narrative. Some see her as a model of bold, Spirit-led courage. Others note that she participated in a pagan king's selection process and concealed her identity for years — decisions that raise questions about compromise. The text doesn't resolve this neatly, and that's part of its power. Esther is a story about God working through imperfect, complicated people in imperfect, complicated circumstances — which means it's a story about all of us.

### My Story

At some point, you realize your life isn't just about you — it's about the impact you leave behind. It's about the legacy you're building and the chains you're breaking for those who come after you.

When Aimee and I adopted our four children, we knew we weren't just giving them a home — we were starting something new. A new story. A new lineage. A new foundation built not on pain or scarcity, but on love, faith, and hope. We were breaking generational chains and beginning a legacy that we pray will echo long after we're gone.

Legacy doesn't start when you're old. It starts now — in your daily choices, in your obedience, in your faithfulness to say yes to God when it's costly and inconvenient. And breaking chains isn't just about ending the cycles of others — it's about letting God end the cycles in you. Fear, comparison, addiction, perfectionism, shame — they don't get to have the final word.

You may feel ordinary, but your life carries extraordinary potential when surrendered to the hands of a legacy-making, chain-breaking God.

You were born for such a time as this.

So, what kind of legacy are you building? What chains is God inviting you to break — not just for you, but for generations you may never see?

You are a legacy maker. You are a chain breaker. And the best is still ahead.

### Reflection

- What kind of legacy do you want to leave behind?
- What chains from your past or your family line is God calling you to break?
- Esther stepped into an opportunity she didn't choose, in circumstances that were far from ideal. Where might God be doing the same with you — right now, right where you are?

### Prayer

*Father, thank You for calling me to be a legacy maker and a chain breaker. Help me live with purpose beyond myself. Break every cycle in me that's not from You. And use my life to build something eternal — not just for me, but for my family and future generations. Like Esther, help me discern the "such a time as this" moments in my own story — and give me the courage to step into them. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

### Berean Challenge

Read the book of Esther in its entirety — it's short enough to read in one sitting. Notice where God is never named but always present. Notice the "who knows" faith of Mordecai. And ask: where is God working in my story in ways I might not see until I look back?

## **Final Word: The Adventure Continues**

If you've made it to this point, thank you. Thank you for walking through these stories, these scriptures, and these lessons with me. My prayer is that something here sparked a fire in your spirit — a desire to say "yes" to your second act, no matter your age, past, or present circumstances.

God isn't finished with you. Your life is still unfolding. And the best chapters may still be unwritten.

I believe that with every "what if" you pursue in faith, heaven leans in. I believe every time you trust God's voice, take a bold step, or simply choose love over fear — you are writing legacy. You are breaking chains.

So, go live with open hands and a willing heart. Go be the encouragement someone else needs. Go create the kind of life that makes people wonder what God could do with theirs.

Your second act starts now.

Let's go.

---

### **A Final Berean Invitation**

This book was prepared under the Ezra Standard — studied in the original languages and context, practiced before it was taught, and presented as clearly as I know how. But the Berean Standard means the final authority isn't me. It's the text.

If anything in these pages stirred something in you, go to the scriptures. If anything raised a question, go to the scriptures. If anything felt too good or too hard to be true, go to the scriptures. The word of God will hold up under every question you bring to it. I'm asking you to bring them.

He sees you. He loves you. He hasn't forgotten you. He has a plan and a purpose. Now go find it in the text for yourself.

## Acknowledgments

To my wife, Aimee — thank you for being my constant, my encourager, my partner in every adventure. This book, like our life, would not be what it is without your steadfast love and belief in me.

To our children — you are my daily reminder that God's redemption story is always unfolding. You've taught me more about love, grace, and growth than any classroom ever could.

To the pastors, mentors, and friends who have spoken truth into my life — thank you for calling out the gifts when I couldn't see them in myself.

To my friends — thank you for helping bring vision to reality. Your heart for people and the Kingdom keeps this mission alive.

And to the readers — whether we've met or not, I see you. I believe in you. And I'm cheering you on every step of the way.

May your second act be the beginning of your greatest impact.

— Kalan