

## Praise for *Forward*

“With so many suffocating in pessimism today this book is a breath of fresh air that provides the life-giving, biblical optimism we need to overcome our current challenges and create a better tomorrow. Dr. David Jeremiah provides us with oxygen for our souls and points us *Forward* with a plan to live the life God has created us to live. I’m so thankful for him, his ministry, and this great book that I’ll be sharing with everyone I know.”

—JON GORDON  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE ENERGY BUS* AND  
*THE POWER OF POSITIVE LEADERSHIP*

“From the first page of the introduction in this book a fresh flame of hope and purpose was ignited in my heart. If, like me, you have felt discouraged, disappointed, or unsure about what lies ahead in this season, Dr. Jeremiah walks us forward with practical steps and profound biblical wisdom. Forward, always forward! This is an important book!”

—SHEILA WALSH  
AUTHOR AND SPEAKER  
CO-HOST OF THE *LIFE TODAY* TELEVISION PROGRAM

“In Dr. David Jeremiah’s new book *Forward*, we are encouraged and guided to find God’s perfect will for our lives and for our tomorrows. In this time of seemingly little hope he lets us know with Christ all things are possible.”

—DAVID GREEN  
FOUNDER AND CEO, HOBBY LOBBY

“Fear arises when our personal worlds spin out of control or the future seems uncertain. At such times we look for voices of calm and reason. Voices like David Jeremiah’s are a trustworthy source of clarity and understanding. What better time than today for his new book, *Forward*, an encouraging reminder of God’s guidance and sovereignty.”

—MAX LUCADO  
PASTOR AND BESTSELLING AUTHOR

“Personal. Practical. Powerful. That’s the best way to describe the dynamic message in Dr. David Jeremiah’s timely and terrific book *Forward: Discovering God’s Presence and Purpose in Your Tomorrow*. Each chapter is a step-by-step guide to living out the dreams God has planted in us. I’ve read many books that told me God *wanted* to do great things in my life, but this one tells me *how* to be on His track to actually experience it. Read it for yourself, give it to family and friends, and follow its solid biblical blueprint for living and leaving this life with a legacy.”

—MIKE HUCKABEE  
FORMER ARKANSAS GOVERNOR  
HOST OF THE *HUCKABEE TALK SHOW*

“From dream to deliverance, Dr. Jeremiah gives practical principles for life’s march forward by daring us to have and pursue a dream. Knowing that no dream can live without hope, he urges us to embrace what is eternal by investing our passions in ways that make it possible for us to outlive our lives with tomorrow always unfolding ‘at the speed of grace.’ What a thought! What a goal! What a trajectory to the most lasting of dreams-come-true! Yes, forward, indeed!”

—BILL AND GLORIA GAITHER

“I have read every book David Jeremiah has written, but none have impacted me like his most recent, *Forward!* I measure a book by how much marking I do and how many pages I have folded down—and I’ve done a ton of both with this book! I couldn’t put it down; I read this book in one sitting, and I won’t be surprised if you do too.”

—PAT WILLIAMS  
NBA EXECUTIVE AND HALL OF FAMER  
AUTHOR OF *REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP*

“The shortest verse in the Bible where Jesus is speaking is Luke 17:32. In it He said, ‘Remember Lot’s wife.’ But don’t let the concise nature of those three words fool you. They pack a punch. It’s easy to become salty—held hostage by your yesterday and kept from experiencing the blessings God has for your tomorrow. In his new book *Forward* Dr. David Jeremiah will help you cut and run, dropping the things weighing you down so you can face the future full-throttle.”

—LEVI LUSKO  
PASTOR, FRESH LIFE CHURCH  
AUTHOR OF *TAKE BACK YOUR LIFE*

“If there was ever a time to focus on your dream, and move *Forward* . . . it’s *now*! This book is guaranteed to get your mind right . . . and get your soul right too. If you are looking to ignite your passion, deepen your purpose, and create more impact, read this book . . . it will change your life!”

—TODD DURKIN, MA, CSCS  
OWNER, FITNESS QUEST 10  
AUTHOR OF *GET YOUR MIND RIGHT*  
HOST OF THE *TODD DURKIN IMPACT SHOW* PODCAST

“Dr. Jeremiah beautifully teaches the liberating lesson of letting go of our past and pressing *Forward* with the perfect plan God has for each of us. I plan to borrow (with credit) his eloquent observation that with the Lord ‘our future is always unfolding at the speed of grace!’ A positive, uplifting, and motivating read for every believer.”

—MATTHEW CROUCH  
PRESIDENT, TRINITY BROADCASTING NETWORK

“Using a mosaic of real-life stories along with practical steps that motivate and direct readers to go *Forward*, David Jeremiah propels believers out of complacency into a life of fulfillment and purpose. I recommend this easy-to-read, easy-to-understand, encouraging, and practical book for all followers of Jesus.”

—ANNE GRAHAM LOTZ  
INTERNATIONAL BIBLE TEACHER  
AUTHOR OF *JESUS IN ME*

“It doesn’t matter if you are leading your family, your business, your church or a college basketball program. If you aren’t moving forward, no matter the situation or circumstance, you are going to spiral backward—and quickly. In *Forward*, Pastor Jeremiah gives us a Bible-centered game plan and blueprint to keep moving our lives onward, upward, and forward.”

—TOM CREAN  
HEAD MEN’S BASKETBALL COACH, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

“The world is paralyzed and panicked, but God’s people were made for times like these. We don’t just look forward, we push forward in the energy of Christ and with the foresight of biblical truth. Don’t miss what’s next for your life! The ink on these pages spills from the coffers of Dr. Jeremiah’s biblical insights and life experiences. As you highlight his sentences, you’ll sense how your future is highlighted with the golden glow of God’s will. Thank you, Dr. J!”

—ROBERT J. MORGAN  
AUTHOR AND SPEAKER

“As a coach and teacher of young people, I am thrilled that Dr. Jeremiah’s new book, *Forward*, is so relatable to the struggles of today’s athlete. Athletes have dreams and goals yet they deal with fear, doubt and distractions. This book turns that narrative upside down. Fear turns to courage and faith, doubt turns to purpose, and distractions turn to trusting God’s plan for your life. I am anxious to share this book with athletes and witness the work that God is doing.”

—PATTY GASSO  
HEAD SOFTBALL COACH, THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

“Once again, Dr. Jeremiah has given us the message we need at the moment we need it the most. Powerful. Biblical. Inspirational. Practical.”

—REV. JOHNNIE MOORE  
PRESIDENT, THE CONGRESS OF CHRISTIAN LEADERS  
AUTHOR OF *THE NEXT JIHAD*

“If you feel stuck now, you don’t have to be. If you feel discouraged, it’s time to deal with that. If you feel uncertain, you can get clarity. Dr. Jeremiah explains the process of how to find and fulfill God’s dream for your life, and promises that because God exists, there is a reason for you to look forward to tomorrow.”

—DR. JOHN ANKERBERG  
AUTHOR AND SPEAKER  
HOST OF *THE JOHN ANKERBERG SHOW*

“Brilliant. Biblical. Beautifully inspiring! *Forward*, by Dr David Jeremiah is a life-transforming journey to hope, help and the healthy direction to move your life toward the purpose, plan and unique path God has for your good and His glory. This book breathes *life* into your future!”

—PAM FARREL  
AUTHOR OF BESTSELLING *MEN ARE LIKE WAFFLES,*  
*WOMEN ARE LIKE SPAGHETTI*

“Can it be possible that God has a plan for your future? David Jeremiah tells us the answer is yes and that God wants you to fully embrace it. In his book *Forward*, he leads you to expectantly look for God’s direction in your life and purpose for your future. It is such an encouraging read!”

—STEVE GREEN  
PRESIDENT, HOBBY LOBBY

“How timely—so very timely! We must go forward—aware of His presence, secure in our relationship, unwavering in our commitment—pressing on no matter the cost. *Forward* will inspire and ready you for the challenge. At eighty-seven, I am pressing on because my Lord tells me there is no retirement, no discharge in the time of war (Ecc. 8:8). It’s that time . . .”

—KAY ARTHUR  
AUTHOR AND TEACHER  
CO-FOUNDER AND AMBASSADOR OF PRECEPT MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

“From a new start to a strong finish, Dr. Jeremiah gives biblical and practical counsel on how to advance God’s way. If you feel like you are stuck in a rut or just want to move to higher ground, *Forward* is the book to read now. Get ready to be inspired, challenged, and blessed!”

—SATISH KUMAR  
FOUNDER AND PASTOR, CALVARY TEMPLE  
HYDERABAD, INDIA

“I can’t wait to pass *Forward* on to my teenagers, spouse, and parents because it has something crucial to say to every generation. We are all searching for answers and meaning in life, especially during troubling days in our world. As you read and apply this book, you’ll not only find your purpose, you’ll experience your heart coming to life again.”

—ARLENE PELLICANE  
SPEAKER AND PODCASTER  
AUTHOR OF *PARENTS RISING*

“*Forward* outlines the kind of life that I want to live every day. Dr. Jeremiah has identified the biblical and practical steps, shared by both Christians and Jews, that help us see past the dizzying array of worries and distractions to the simple, straightforward path of a life devoted to God.”

—Yael ECKSTEIN  
PRESIDENT AND CEO, THE INTERNATIONAL  
FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

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# Introduction

This book is about the rest of your life. It's about tomorrow. *Your* tomorrow—and the day after that.

Your God-given future is not a haphazard jumble of confusing contingencies. If you feel stuck, you don't have to be. If you feel discouraged, it's time to deal with that. If you feel uncertain, you can get clarity.

You're traveling an appointed way filled with promise and productivity. Everything in your past has prepared you for what's next, and every promise of God will provide what's needed. This is no time to let anxiety, apathy, or anything else hamper you.

I've written this book to encourage you to push forward, whatever your age or circumstances. Get on with your life and chase your unfolding future—and do it with focus, faith, and fervor. I'm excited about whatever is next for you! Your coming days and years are brimming with blessings. Yes, there may be burdens, but God knows about those too. So don't dread tomorrow. Leverage it for the Lord and for others.

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I've lived long enough to learn something: no matter what season of life you're in, your best and brightest days are just around the corner. That's not just my opinion and it's not a pious platitude; it's biblical truth. When you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, your future is always unfolding at the speed of grace. God is waiting to use you now more than ever, and your life is far from finished. It's just beginning.

Think of it this way. Your car's rearview mirror is a fraction of the size of the windshield, and there's a reason for that. Safe drivers glance in the mirror but focus on the road ahead. But how would you like to be the kind of driver preoccupied with the mirror? Too many people travel through life that way. They regret yesterday's failures, rehash yesterday's blessings, coast through life on a quarter-tank of fuel, and hope for a scenic overlook ahead. Too often that leaves them stalled by the side of the road.

Let me hand you a bucket and rag. Wash the windshield, buckle your seat belt, and shift the car into drive. That was the apostle Paul's attitude when he declared, "I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking *forward* to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us" (Phil. 3:13–14 NLT).

That's been my approach to life too, but I felt a sense of rediscovery in this regard on Sunday, April 14, 2019. That evening at Shadow Mountain Community Church, where I serve, we invited musician Tommy Walker to minister to us in a concert. (To watch the song, go to <https://vimeo.com/388291193/5c5f551a48>.) Tommy is a gifted and heartfelt artist, and his last song grabbed my heart. It was as though he had written and sung that song just for me. Its title was "Forward," and the lyrics are, in part:

It's been a long, long road  
It's been a crooked path  
With many twists and turns

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But I'm not looking back  
I'm walking straight ahead  
Believing what You've said, Lord  
That You're gonna be with me  
No matter what life brings

Forward, I'm going forward  
To the plans You have for me  
To horizons yet unseen  
Forward to Your new mercies I will find  
As I'm pressing toward the prize  
I'm going forward.<sup>1</sup>

In speaking with Tommy after the concert and later reading what he wrote about this song, I came to appreciate those words even more.

Tommy wrote, "This song was written with a sense of determination to move FORWARD by faith into the next season of my life. The older I get, the easier it is to want my life to be safe, comfortable, and predictable. But that's not God's plan! The God we worship is a God who loves the new and He's all about bringing newness to our lives and the lives of those around us."

Tommy continued, "We will have to let go of the safe and familiar in order to step into the things that bring His life, joy, and power! God desires that all of us press in and press on by faith to the good plans and good works he has for each of us! It's never too late! Let's say no to fear, complacency, and comfort and move FORWARD by faith in Jesus Name!"<sup>2</sup>

His song became the theme of this book.

Effective men and women are *forward* thinkers. The nineteenth-century preacher F. B. Meyer wrote, "It is a mistake to be always turning back to recover the past. The law for Christian living is not backward, but forward; not for experiences that lie behind, but for doing the will of God, which is always ahead and beckoning us to follow."

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Meyer went on to urge us: “Leave the things that are behind, and reach forward to those that are before, for on each new height to which we attain, there are the appropriate joys that befit the new experience. Don’t fret because life’s joys are fled. There are more in front. Look up, press forward, the best is yet to be!”<sup>3</sup>

I’ve thought about this over and over, framing in my mind what that looks like for me. I believe there are ten actions that enable us to aggressively press forward in life: dream, pray, choose, focus, risk, pursue, believe, invest, finish, and celebrate. In this book, I’ve set forth each of them with a deep prayer that you’ll share the excitement of living assertively in a forward direction.

This book is for young people who desperately need to know these things as they start moving into the fullness of God’s will for them. It’s for young parents and professionals stunned by the pressures of life. It’s for those in midlife who need a fresh start. And it’s for those of us who are older, because sometimes we forget that our richest moments of divine service are at hand.

Have you ever needed to jump-start your engine? The ten steps I describe in the pages that follow will spark your interest and help you move forward with fresh energy. It begins when you start to sense God’s desires and dreams for you, which are birthed in prayer. As those dreams evolve in your heart, you declutter your routine so you can live with sharper focus and deeper faith. You latch on to the truth of God—that He has a unique road map for you and has wonderfully fashioned you for the route He’s chosen.

In the process, you have to cast off pessimism and press onward with a positive mindset like that of the heroes in the book of Revelation who were ready to “follow the Lamb wherever he goes” (Rev. 14:4 NIV). Your life is an investment with eternal dividends. Here on earth, you’ll finish in God’s timing only to immediately resume your activities in heaven, where an eternity of worship, work, and fellowship awaits you.

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In Jesus Christ your life is not obsolete, it's not out of fashion, and it's not over!

May the Lord Jesus use this book to help you discover—or to rediscover—the dreams, desires, and driving force He has waiting for you as you shift into following Him *forward!*

*Chapter 1*

# *Dream*

*Seize Your Tomorrow Today*

When we think of great dreamers, we think of people like George Lucas, Elon Musk, or Walt Disney. Anyone who's seen a Star Wars movie, read about electric cars, or visited Disney World knows that great accomplishments begin with one person's larger-than-life imagination.

Walt Disney's dream began with cartoon sketches, two failed companies, and a borrowed book on animation. In time, he brought beloved characters to life, created classic films, and built Disney World, Disneyland, and Epcot. He created "the happiest place on earth" and became known as the man who made dreams come true.

Disney's public persona was "Uncle Walt," a smiling man who kindly signed autographs in a tweed jacket while pattering down Main Street in a fringe-topped car driven by Mickey Mouse. But behind the scenes, the real Walt Disney was a demanding, hard-charging man of a million ideas who exasperated family and colleagues. His life was

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a whirlwind of visionary projects that exhausted his associates and changed our world.

When Disney was diagnosed with lung cancer, he was still planning movies, developing theme parks, and mulling over his newest idea—an “Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow,” or EPCOT. As he lay on his deathbed with his brother Roy sitting nearby, Walt looked up at the hospital ceiling tiles, raised his finger, and traced his plans for Epcot by pointing to them. Every fourth tile represented a square mile, he told his brother. Using that mental map, he suggested routes for his envisioned highways and monorails.<sup>1</sup>

Having said all that, I believe Walt Disney’s dreams were too small. Believe it or not, you and I can dream bigger dreams than Disney ever conceived. It’s one thing to invest one’s life in a magic kingdom but quite another to play a part in the kingdom of God. As followers of Christ, we can cultivate a dream for our lives that outlasts the world, transforms time, changes eternity, and advances His cause and His kingdom for His glory.

In fact, that’s the story of the Bible. The Bible is filled with people who saw what life could look like in God’s kingdom and then moved forward in faith. Abraham dreamed of a great nation when he was yet childless. Moses envisioned a free people when the Israelites were still making bricks without straw. Joshua envisioned an occupied land; Samson, a defeated enemy; David, a temple on a hill. Nehemiah built miles of reconstructed walls in his prayers before a single stone was laid. Daniel glimpsed a future kingdom; Peter, an established church; Paul, a global mission.

All these stories—the dreams of men and women of God thousands of years ago—still inspire, guide, and affect us more than we know. And they remind us God wants to do the same with you and me. The Lord’s dreams for us are just as real, and the process of finding and fulfilling them hasn’t changed.

That’s what this book is about. How do you stay focused on tomorrow, letting go of the past and moving forward to the future? What’s

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the role of prayer? How do you figure out the next step? What's the risk? And what's waiting for you at the end of it all? In these pages I want to share with you these things—and more. I've never been content to hang up my boots and neither should you. There's always more out in front of us. Always a reason to look forward to tomorrow.

Typically, it all starts with a dream. That's the first step in this process of moving forward.

When I talk about a dream, I'm not describing a self-made vision of your life apart from God's will. And I'm not using the word as the ancient prophets did when they had supernatural visions of inspired revelation. I'm not talking about seeing heavenly creatures or having apocalyptic dreams. Instead, I'm talking about envisioning the next step or stage of your life. A dream or a vision is simply a picture of what you feel God wants you to do next.

What about you? What's your dream? Can you envision God's next step for your life? What does He want to do through you this year, in the coming years, and in the remaining time He gives you in this life?

### **The Power of a Dream**

The Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18 κJV). Without a blueprint, you can't build a house; and without an idea of what kind of house you want, a blueprint can't be drawn. The same is true when it comes to making plans for the future. If you don't have a clear idea about where you want to go—and why you want to go there—it's difficult to sustain forward momentum.

Without a dream, we float through life without ever catching the current. Many of us fill the majority of our hours with diversions and only a few with dreams. But our world is shaped by determined dreamers, by men and women of vision. Like them, you need a dream to achieve your goal.

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Brett Hagler is someone who knows the power of a dream. After battling cancer in high school, Brett entered his twenties determined to make the most of life with lots of “gold, girls, and glory.”

“I bought into the false equation that material things were going to bring me fulfillment. . . . It was the path to emptiness.”

With the help of a friend, Hagler turned to Christ. Shortly afterward, he visited Haiti and saw the devastation from the 2010 earthquake. Hagler was reading the New Testament at the time, and he noticed how Jesus had a strong “bent and heart for the poor.”

God gave Hagler a dream to establish a nonprofit company called New Story, a housing start-up that uses 3D printing machines to create homes. New Story can build a two-bedroom, one bath home in about 24 hours! Goldman Sachs calls Hagler one of the Top 100 Most Intriguing Entrepreneurs as he seeks to combat global homelessness.

Today when Brett travels the country telling people about his story, he encourages audiences with a simple but powerful motto: dream big, but start small.<sup>2</sup> That’s great advice!

I admire people who envision things not yet seen and do things not yet done. Imagineers open the door to the future and let us in. Their names fill the chapters of our history books: Alexander the Great, Nicolaus Copernicus, Leonardo Da Vinci, Christopher Columbus, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Neil Armstrong, Steve Jobs, Mary Anderson.

Mary Anderson? Who’s she?

She was an ordinary woman who visited New York City during the winter of 1902. The snow and ice were coming down furiously, and when Mary hopped on a streetcar she noticed the driver had to keep the front window open because the windshield was covered with snow. Returning home, she envisioned a rubber device that would sweep back and forth over the windshield to keep it clear for driving. She invented the windshield wiper.<sup>3</sup>

You see, everyone can have vision—young or old, rich or poor,

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famous or obscure. Whether you dream of peering through portholes or windshields, you need to be gazing into the future and asking God what He wants you to do next.

### **Build Your Dream**

Jan Koum was born into a Jewish family in Kiev, Ukraine, in 1976, during the Soviet era when anti-Semitism was rampant. There was no running water in their home, and his parents were seldom together because of work. They assumed their phone was tapped, so they had limited contact with the world. Jan grew up with a constant feeling of being bugged and surveilled.

When he was sixteen, Jan and his mother immigrated to California. (His dad planned to come later but died before he could make the trip.) Jan's mother found work as a babysitter, and Jan swept floors to help pay bills. When he got his first computer in high school, he taught himself programming by buying used computer manuals. That skill led to a job as an internet security tester, and later he was hired by Yahoo.

One evening Jan visited the home of Alex Fishman, who often invited the local Russian community to his home for pizza and movies. Forty or so people showed up, and that's where Jan's dream was born. He wanted a way for people to stay in touch without Big Brother listening—an encrypted phone app. Apps were a new thing, and Jan had bought his first iPhone and visited one of the first app stores a few months before. He wondered if an app could actually help people stay in touch around the world. He remembered the difficulty of communicating with his family in Ukraine and the expense involved. He also shuddered as he thought of being monitored. Koum began to envision an app that would safely connect people around the world.

He thought of the name WhatsApp because it sounded like "What's up." Jan found some cheap cubicles in a converted warehouse

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and worked day and night, covering himself in blankets to stay warm. Instead of making money, he drained his bank account. This was during the great recession of 2009. Who launches a start-up in a downturn?

Still, Jan Koum and his partner from Yahoo days, Brian Acton, worked on. “We won’t stop until every single person on the planet has an affordable and reliable way to communicate with their friends and loved ones,” Jan promised.<sup>4</sup>

When Jan Koum sold WhatsApp to Facebook for \$19.3 billion in 2014, he chose an unusual place to sign the papers: an old white building that used to house the social services office in the California town where Jan went to school. He and his mother had stood in line in front of that same building to collect food stamps.<sup>5</sup>

When Jan Koum had nothing, he actually had the one thing many people never find: he had a dream. Despite hardship, and against great odds, the vision of a better tomorrow drove him forward in life. That’s what a dream can do for you, and you don’t need a computer, a movie studio, or a theme park to realize it. All you need is a picture of what your tomorrow could be as you follow Christ.

Lillian Trasher had that kind of dream. At the beginning of the last century, Lillian was working in an orphanage in North Carolina when she felt God’s call to pursue missionary work in Egypt. The call was so strong that she broke off her engagement when her fiancé did not share her vision. She sold her belongings and boldly booked passage to a foreign country, arriving with less than a hundred dollars in her purse. One day she was asked to go to the bedside of a dying young widow, who begged Lillian to care for her malnourished baby girl. Lillian agreed, and so began the first orphanage in Egypt.

Those first years were filled with great difficulty and limited support, but Lillian persevered to realize her vision of not only an orphanage but also schools and evangelistic ministries. By the time of her death in 1961, Lillian had cared for more than eight thousand orphans and touched thousands of others. The organization

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she founded, the Lillian Trasher Orphanage, still serves the needy in Egypt today.

For me, the best part of Lillian's story was the prayer she offered to the Lord when yet a child. She never forgot it, nor did the Lord. She said: "Lord, I want to be your little girl. Lord, if ever I can do anything for You, just let me know and I'll do it!"<sup>6</sup>

Can you think of a simpler prayer than that? Try it! *Lord, if ever I can do anything for You, just let me know and I'll do it.*

So if vision is so important, how do you build your own? There are many biblical models you could follow, but I believe the best example of dream-building in the Bible is the story of King David's vision to build a temple for the Lord atop Jerusalem's Mount Moriah.

For hundreds of years, Israel had worshiped around the frayed remains of the tabernacle, the elaborate tent constructed in the days of Moses as a portable house of worship. But now the nation was occupying the land God had promised, and Jerusalem was its capital. So David began dreaming of a permanent place where people could worship for centuries to come.

David's story reveals the principles you and I can follow as we build our own dreams.

### **Root Your Dream in History**

In 2 Samuel 7, David told the prophet Nathan, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains" (v. 2). Nathan's initial reaction was positive—go ahead and do it. So David grabbed hold of his dream and began moving forward to see its fulfillment.

But David's idea to build a temple didn't just "poof" into his head like an exploding nebula. It was rooted in the history of Israel. Centuries before, God told Abraham to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice and burnt offering on a distant mountain. And God was specific

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about the mountain. Not just any hilltop would do. It had to be Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:2).

A thousand years later, when David and then Solomon planned to build the Jewish temple, they placed it on that very mountain, Mount Moriah (2 Chron. 3:1). David's vision for the location of his temple had roots as deep as Genesis 22. It was grounded in the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only begotten son as a burnt offering (Heb. 11:17–19). It's no coincidence that a thousand years after David, Jesus Christ gave Himself as an offering for sin on or near this very ridge.

From Abraham and his son, to David and his temple, to Christ and His cross—everything was linked, and each event had its roots in the one that preceded it.

The best dreams don't start with us but instead are planted in us by God. If it isn't rooted, it's rotten. We stand on the shoulders of others. We are links in a chain, and we build on what others have done, even as future generations will build on the work we have done.

That's why it's all right to look around for ideas and see what others are doing. We get ideas from history and from how others are inspired to act today. To develop your dream, think about your heritage, what you love to do, and your life experiences. Think about your background. Everything in your life has prepared you for the next step, so look at what's already happening in your life and church. Start where you are and work outward and forward.

Brewster McLeod was a pastor at Southland Christian Church in Lexington, Kentucky, for forty years. In 2000, he saw that many special-needs students were inadvertently excluded from their high school prom. So he organized a prom event just for them in a local church. That experience fueled McLeod's burden for special-needs kids, and the focus of his ministry shifted to serving those with special needs. For the past two decades he's ministered to this group in the name of Christ.

Last year, the now-retired pastor brought his vision to life in a new way—he opened a nonprofit coffee shop that employs fifty young

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people with autism and developmental difficulties. The coffee shop provides income and purpose for the employees, whom he calls VIPs, and it helps integrate them into the community by allowing customers the chance to grow comfortable with those with special needs.

“I don’t do it for that pat on the back because that can be very addicting,” McLeod says. “I do it because I really care about them and I know that they are gifted. I just want them to know they have great value.”<sup>7</sup>

Brewster McLeod saw a need that moved his heart, and he responded by doing something that came naturally to him, something he’d been doing for years—he organized an event in a church. And from there his dream kept growing.

Future vision comes from past ventures. The new is built on the old. As you ponder and pray about your personal dreams, think back over your life, your experiences, your mentors and influencers, your gifts, and your passions. Root your dream in history, and you will have a firm foothold on which to move forward.

### **Reproduce Your Dream in a Picture**

As ideas and intentions bubble up in your heart and mind, you need to figure out where to begin and how to implement your dream. You have to nudge the abstract burden into a real-life plan. After all, for your vision to touch others it must become as practical as Esther’s dinner, David’s slingshot, Gideon’s torches, the boy’s lunch of bread and fish, the Good Samaritan’s wine and oil, Philemon’s hospitality, Dorcas’s robes, and Paul’s pen and parchment. We never know how a single detail, born from a visionary mind, will be used by the Lord in helping this world.

Visionaries have an uncanny ability to “see” their dreams and convey them in images. That’s how David built the impetus needed for his temple project. As we have seen, David’s dream began when he

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told the prophet Nathan, “See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells inside tent curtains” (2 Sam. 7:2). The temple wasn’t an abstract concept but a vision that filled his mind in technicolor. He was able to convey that image to others and motivate them to action by drawing a contrast: “Look at my palace with its paneled walls and glorious bulwarks, and look at that frayed tent called the tabernacle. Shouldn’t God’s house be better than any home of yours or mine?”

The ability to see what could be is essential to straining forward toward the realization of your dream. At the funeral of Steve Jobs, his wife, Laurene Powell, said: “It is hard enough to see what is already there, to remove the many impediments to a clear view of reality, but Steve’s gift was even greater: he saw clearly what was not there, what could be there, what had to be there. His mind was never a captive of reality. Quite the contrary. He imagined what reality lacked, and he set out to remedy it.”<sup>8</sup>

That’s so important. As a pastor, I’ve been involved in ten building programs during my career. By God’s grace, I’ve been able to picture each of the buildings in my mind before they showed up in blueprints, scale models, or erected structures. I don’t know how you can fulfill a vision unless you see it in your prayers and dreams.

One day Edwin Land was sightseeing in New Mexico with his three-year-old granddaughter, and they were taking pictures of things that interested them. The little girl was impatient to see how the pictures turned out. She wanted to know why she couldn’t see them instantly. Land took a short walk in the desert and pondered that question. By the time he returned, he had visualized a camera that would develop its negatives instantly. He saw the whole thing in his mind, and he went on to invent the Polaroid Land Camera, one of the most successful photographic products of the twentieth century. Describing how he invented the camera, Land later said, “You always start with a fantasy. Part of the fantasy technique is to visualize something as perfect. Then with the experiments you work back from the fantasy to reality, hacking away at the components.”<sup>9</sup>

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Having a dream for tomorrow isn't just a matter of feeling a generalized burden. It may start there, with a yearning to feed the hungry, help the homeless, or evangelize the world. But as your vision develops, it takes on distinct and detailed images. You can see yourself rolling up your sleeves and getting a grip on the very things needed to press forward with your dream. You can convey it to others in a way that excites them.

Don't worry if you can't see the final fulfillment of your long-term dreams—we will walk through the practical steps toward reaching success in the chapters to come. For now, what matters is being able to imagine your dream in a way that captivates both you and others.

### **Reinforce Your Dream with Determination**

David also discovered that every dream faces discouragement. That's part of the process of proving its validity. David's dream for the temple excited him like nothing else in his life. He was fired up, ready to go, eager to lead the campaign to build. He could see it in his mind's eye every time he looked from his palace rooftop toward Mount Moriah.

But then the roof caved in, so to speak. God told David he would not be allowed to build the temple because of his violent past: "You shall not build a house for My name, because you have been a man of war and have shed blood. . . . It is your son Solomon who shall build My house and My courts" (1 Chron. 28:3, 6). Talk about the death of a vision!

Oh, how many of my visions have died, and each time it feels like a small part of my heart dies. I have a little place near my home where I go and park my car and pout a little when a dream of mine doesn't pan out. I think through it, surrender things to God's will, and then drive away looking forward through the windshield, not backward in the rearview mirror.

But David didn't pout for long, if at all. He told himself something

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like this: “Well, if I can’t do it myself, and if God has appointed the task for my son Solomon, then I’ll do all I can to help him succeed.” In refusing to give up on the project because he was taken out of the driver’s seat, David illustrated a core value of dream building: no dream is ever realized without a huge measure of determination.

It reminds me of a story about my oldest grandson, David Todd. One of our family Christmas traditions is assembling jigsaw puzzles. This year David Todd joined in. He enjoyed it so much that he told his roommates about it when he got back to college, and they decided to tackle a puzzle together. To my amazement, they bought a two-thousand-piece puzzle.

It took ten days for them to finish the puzzle around their regular obligations. Then I got a phone call from a very frustrated David Todd. He told me the puzzle was done, but the very last piece was missing!

So what did he and his friends do? Determined to complete what they started, they went back to the store and bought the very same puzzle. Using the box top as a guide, they searched through all two thousand pieces until they found the culprit. With great satisfaction, they snapped that final piece into place. The completed puzzle now hangs on their wall, bearing the signatures of everyone who helped.

The puzzle was a fun project, a simple, shared goal among friends. But their determination to achieve that goal was real. The picture on the box top was both vision and guide, showing them their goal as well as the exact puzzle piece they needed to achieve it. God’s vision is a guide for you to follow too. And when God places His dream in your heart, you become more determined and dedicated. You press on to see the work finished.

In the Bible, a young widow named Ruth who lived in Moab was devoted to her mother-in-law, Naomi. When Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem after her husband and sons died, Ruth wanted to accompany her. Naomi tried to dissuade her, but the Bible says that when Naomi “saw that she was determined to go with her,” she yielded and

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took her along (Ruth 1:18). They arrived in Bethlehem, where Ruth gleaned fallen barley and wheat from the fields of Naomi's relative Boaz to make their bread. Eventually she married Boaz, and their son became the grandfather of King David, and thus part of the family line of Jesus Christ.

Having a deep conviction of what we feel God wants us to do for eternity will make us men and women of devotion, dedication, and determination. When we are determined to do our part for God, the pieces of the puzzle magnificently come together.

### **Reconcile Your Dream with Its Cost**

As you build your vision, be willing to sacrifice. Dreams are costly, as David found out when God led him to purchase some land for the temple at a high spot in the area. It was owned by Araunah the Jebusite, who used the high location for its winds to thresh out his wheat. The chaff would blow away, and the grains of wheat would be collected and sold. David approached Araunah for this valuable site, the most desirable location in Jerusalem.

Because he was the venerable king of Israel, David could have seized the land, and that may be why Araunah offered to donate it to him. But David said, "No, but I will surely buy it from you for a price; nor will I offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God with that which costs me nothing" (2 Sam. 24:24).

Big dreams are expensive. If you've experienced a fulfilled dream, you know what I'm talking about. The cost comes in money, energy, criticism, unbelief, unplanned obstructions, unfaithful helpers, and a multitude of other discouraging things.

I think Jesus was trying to help us with all of this when He wrote these words: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it. . . . Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit

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down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?" (Luke 14:28, 31).

Your dream might not involve building a tower or going to war, but there is still a cost involved if you want to see it through. Not understanding that cost up front can cause you to give up on your dream when you hit the first hurdle.

Dorothea Dix was a woman who understood the cost of a dream. Dorothea, who was born in Maine in 1802, ran away from home at age twelve to escape her alcoholic family and abusive father. She lived with her grandmother in Boston, and by age fourteen she was teaching in a school for girls. Eventually she was asked to teach a Sunday school class of women in a prison housing the insane and mentally disturbed, who, at that time, were jailed alongside criminals and treated like animals. Many of these souls were cold and naked, kept in darkness, chained to the walls, and even flogged.

Dorothea determined with all her heart to help these wretched castaways from society, and she devoted the rest of her life to a relentless vision for prison reform for the mentally ill. She visited penitentiaries, filed reports, testified before legislatures, wrote articles, gave speeches, and initiated reforms. She visited hundreds of prisons and jails, and everywhere she went, she grappled with a level of suffering that sickened her.

In her trademark bonnet and cashmere shawl, Dorothea logged more than sixty thousand miles by train and carriage, testifying that God's providence was defining her path. Horace Mann said she had a "divine magnetism."

Dorothea was among the first American reformers to speak up for mentally ill children. And when her proposals were voted down in state legislatures, she redoubled her efforts. Traveling abroad, she championed prison reform for the mentally disabled across Britain and throughout Europe. When the Civil War broke out in America, she was named Chief of Army Nurses for the Union and wore herself out organizing medical care for wounded soldiers. When the war

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ended, she was sixty-three years old and weighed ninety-five pounds, but she was far from finished.

Dorothea hit the road again on behalf of the mentally ill, spending another fifteen years traveling between Maine and California, establishing ministries for society's forgotten victims. "It would seem all my work is never to be done," she wrote. Yet she kept working.

For the last fifty years of her life, Dorothea had no home. She simply lived in the quarters of the 123 asylums and hospitals she had founded. She passed away at age eighty-five, and Matthew 25:35–36 was read at her funeral: "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me."<sup>10</sup>

Dorothea paid a huge price in pursuing her dream, but she also received a great reward—namely, improvements across the globe in the treatment of millions of people suffering from mental illness. The cost she paid for her efforts was real, but the benefits are still rippling through our world today.

### **Release Your Dream to Your Legacy**

Looking back on this period of Israel's history, one thing jumps out at me: this was David's dream, but it ended up being called Solomon's temple. Amazingly, David not only accepted that—he made it happen.

David refused to allow his dream to die when he died. And although he was not allowed to build the temple, the Lord nevertheless gave him the construction details, which he passed on to his son Solomon. In 1 Chronicles 28:10–12 we read:

"Consider now, for the LORD has chosen you to build a house for the sanctuary; be strong, and do it." Then David gave his son Solomon the plans for the vestibule, its houses, its treasuries, its upper chambers,

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its inner chambers, and the place of the mercy seat; and the plans for all that he had by the Spirit, of the courts of the house of the LORD, of all the chambers all around, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries for the dedicated things.

The Holy Spirit had instructed David with the specific details of the temple, and David in turn passed them on to his son. I can imagine David transferring the information from God onto an architectural blueprint, then laying it out before Solomon and saying, “Here it is. God gave this to me. This is what you are to build.”

David had dreamed of building a permanent place where God could be worshiped, and he determined to leave something behind that would honor the Lord. It was his dream and the resources he put in place that allowed his son Solomon to move quickly toward the construction of the temple.

David’s instructions to Solomon have been a charge to pastors, missionaries, and Christian workers ever since: “Be strong and of good courage, and do it; do not fear nor be dismayed, for the LORD God—my God—will be with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you, until you have finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD” (1 Chron. 28:20).

This story also illustrates how it’s possible to achieve something after your death that could not have been achieved during your life. Before he died, David decided to pass on something that would live on after him. From his life we can learn the great importance of dreaming beyond the span of our years. How can God use us? What is something He could do through each of us after we are gone?

I often think about this when I hold the *Jeremiah Study Bible* in my hands. I remember as a young boy reading the *Scotfield Reference Bible* that my parents gave me for my sixteenth birthday. It was part of my spiritual education. I still have that Bible and I cherish it. It was the standard reference Bible during my growing-up years even though it was copyrighted in 1909. Years after its inception, it was still helping

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people like me understand what the Bible says, what the Bible means, and what the Bible means for me.

I can only hope and pray that in some small way the *Jeremiah Study Bible*, which was released in 2013, will have that same impact on some future student of the Scriptures.

One Sunday afternoon in 1771, a man named Valentin Haüy ducked into a restaurant in Paris for dinner. He sat near the stage, and the show that evening featured blind people in a comedy routine. They were objects of ridicule and cruelty. The act was designed to make fun of their blindness. Deeply offended, Haüy began to develop a burden for the blind.

Sometime later, he spotted a sightless street urchin who was begging for coins outside a Parisian church. Giving the boy some money, Haüy was amazed to see the boy feel the raised markings on the coins and distinguish the amounts. That gave Haüy an idea. Why couldn't books be written with raised letters, like images on coins? Why couldn't people learn to read with their fingers? Haüy took the boy off the streets, offered him food and shelter, devised a plan with wooden blocks and numbers, and taught the boy to read. In 1784, Haüy started the world's first school for blind children. It was in Paris, and one of the first teachers was the blind boy rescued from the streets.

But that's just the beginning.

Several years later, another boy named Louis was born in the village of Coupvray, France. His father was a farmer and harness maker, and as a toddler Louis loved watching his father work with leather tools. But tragedy struck in 1812 when three-year-old Louis was playing with a leftover strap of leather, trying to punch holes in it. His hand slipped, and the sharp tool punctured and put out his eye. An infection set in that spread to the other eye, and little Louis ended up blinded in both eyes for life.

A local minister named Jacques Palluy loved the boy and began visiting him to read him the Bible. Seeing the boy had a good mind,

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Father Jacques determined he should receive an education. So at age ten, Louis was enrolled in the school Haüy had established in Paris, where he proved to be a brilliant student.

Eventually Louis began teaching other students in the Paris School for the Blind. He studied Haüy's method of reading, and he also became aware of a system of military communication developed by a French army captain that allowed soldiers to communicate in the dark by running their fingers over a series of dots and dashes. Though still a teenager, Louis Braille began adapting these systems into a program of his own; in 1829, at age twenty, he published a little book on the Braille method of reading.

The school resided in a damp building by the River Seine. It was cold and unhealthy, and the food and conditions were poor. Louis developed tuberculosis, but he continued working on his system of reading, which began catching on and soon was being exported around the world. As his health failed, Louis said, "I am convinced my mission on earth has been accomplished. I asked God to carry me away from this world."<sup>11</sup>

Think of the chain reaction of that cascading dream. One man developed a burden for the blind when he saw ridiculed actors on stage and a beggar boy on the streets. His burden led him to establish a school and attempt a system of reading. Then a local pastor developed a burden for a blind boy in another village and taught him the Bible and longed to send him to school. That blind child, Louis Braille, developed a burden to improve and to expand Haüy's work. The world was changed, and as a result, millions of sightless souls have experienced the joy of reading the Bible and other books for themselves for almost two centuries.

You and I may never create a language for the blind or build a temple for the Lord, but please remember there are no small tasks in the Lord's work, and no insignificant dreams. Our work is never routine, our labor is never wasted, and our legacy is capable of out-living us.

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### **You Can Trust God with Your Dreams**

I've always loved radio and everything about radio. From sitting next to the radio as a child with my ear to the speaker so I could listen to *The Lone Ranger* or *The Shadow*, to putting together Knight radio kits as a teenager. For reasons I cannot explain, radio has had a mysterious hold over me as far back as I can remember.

When I became a student at Cedarville College in 1959, I was given the radio opportunity of a lifetime. A new Christian FM station was being launched in Springfield, Ohio, just fifteen miles from my home. I don't remember how it happened, but I was able to audition for an on-air announcing position, and I got the job.

Every day, Monday through Friday, I drove to Springfield to do the 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. shift on WEEC-FM. I did the news, hosted call-in music shows, and cued up and played radio programs like *Back to the Bible* and *Unshackled*. I loved every minute of it, and when I was asked to help start a radio station on our college campus, I teamed up with Paul Gathany, a college classmate, and my girlfriend—and soon-to-be wife—Donna Thompson, and we launched WCDR-FM. This station had a humble beginning. It was a twelve-watt transmitter on the third floor of the administration building. We used to joke with each other that on a good day you could hear the station on the first floor.

In time that station grew to a network of stations that literally covered the entire Ohio Miami Valley with great Christian music and the message of the gospel. I believe God used WCDR to help grow Cedarville College.

When I was a college junior, God called me into the ministry. It was absolutely, definitely clear to me that I was to become a preacher of the gospel, so I immediately enrolled in Dallas Theological Seminary. Donna and I got married right after graduation, and we headed off to Texas for four years of post-graduate training.

My greatest regret, if I could call it that, was this: I loved radio and

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had spent most of my life involved with radio. Yet now it appeared God was leading me in a totally different direction in terms of my vocation and lifelong calling.

Radio was put on hold for four years while I worked on my master's degree, but what happened after that is one of the most amazing stories of my life. After a short stint as a youth pastor in New Jersey and twelve years as a pastor of a start-up church in Fort Wayne, Indiana, I accepted the call to Shadow Mountain Community Church (at that time called Scott Memorial Baptist Church) in San Diego, California. The next year I began a local five-day-a-week teaching program on a Christian station in San Diego, Salem Radio's KPRZ. The station manager, David Ruleman, helped me get started in this new format . . . and the rest is history.

Today *Turning Point* hits the airwaves on more than three thousand radio stations in the United States, and on many of those stations the program is heard two or three times per day. *Momento Decisivo*, the Spanish edition of the program, is heard in every country where Spanish is spoken. We broadcast more than 121,000 radio programs and 4,050 television programs outside the United States each year—in languages including Bahasa, Hindi, and Mandarin.

So you can see that God did not call me into the ministry to take my dream away. He called me into the ministry because my dream was way too small! He had a much better and a much bigger plan for my life.

As a result of those experiences, I've learned I can trust God with my dreams even as I move forward toward His plans for my life.

And so can you.