

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR

JENTEZEN FRANKLIN

OVERCOMING

WHEN YOU FEEL

OVERWHELMED

5 STEPS TO SURVIVING THE CHAOS OF LIFE

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JENTEZEN FRANKLIN



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To all the volunteers who serve
within all our ministries
and outreaches at Free Chapel.

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INTRODUCTION

Have you felt like giving up lately? I have. Our struggles may look different, but I'm sure you have endured a trying season in your life, as I have. Or maybe you are in the thick of one now. Maybe thoughts like these have constantly crossed your mind: *How did I get here? How can this be happening to our family?* You and I have different lives, but one thing we all have in common would be the overwhelming feelings that come from things like heartbreak, betrayal, addiction, mental illness, division, lies, deception, tears, sorrow, discouragement, fear, legal battles, shame, guilt, depression and the spiritual warfare we never even knew existed.

Are you sure you want to keep reading this book? I don't mean to trigger you, but it's only fair that I warn you—this book is not all about fairy tales and roses. It's a book about real life, real marriages, real families and a real Savior who loves us more than we can ever comprehend and who is still writing the script of our lives through every page of pain and confusion.

It feels as if our changing, challenging times have left a lot of people with a busted nest. That home, once a nice, cozy place to retreat to and rest in, has been dismantled piece by piece. God will sometimes allow our nest to be dismantled in order to teach us how to fly. What seems cruel can also be beneficial.

Many Christians have folded their wings and developed the nesting syndrome: a tendency toward stasis. The nest has become their security. But there comes a time when the momma eagle starts to disturb the nest so the eaglets can fulfill their potential (see Deuteronomy 32:11–12). What a nest of security could not do, a good stirring of the nest can. You are pregnant with promises. But mounting up with wings as eagles requires that you get out of the nest and into the air.

Is God disturbing your nest? You are not born to live and die in your nest. You are destined for higher ground. You have a heavenly calling.

Many churches have become nester churches, where comfort is valued above all else. But remember this: It's better to fail trying to fly than to sit in the nest and die. In Job 29:18, we find Job crying out. He says (paraphrasing), "I wish it were like the days of old. I wish I could go back to how it used to be, when everything was cozy and comfortable. For I said, *I will die in my nest*. But God said, *No, I didn't bless you to die in the nest. I'm going to take you higher than the rest of the birds can fly.*"

I relate to Job's cry. You may, too. Have you ever wondered how something so right—like a great relationship, a meaningful vocation, a spiritual calling, a God-designed dream—can turn out so wrong? The answer always is sin. It just creeps in through compromise, disobedience, rebellion, worldliness. Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy. And we're learning now, like never before, how to keep holding onto broken pieces until God makes some kind of sense of it all. The spiritual battle taking place now is real. The attacks you and I have gone through, and are likely still going through, are part of a much larger attack.

The end-time battle for the minds and hearts of our families is upon us. The battle for the mind is raging. Satan, the prince and the power of the air, is making an all-out attempt to seize this generation.

He is planting his thoughts of rebellion, lust, violence, drunkenness, depression, suicide, addiction and mayhem in the minds of millions. He is after our minds.

With the advancement of technology, Satan has issued new orders to corrupt the minds of this generation through the internet, movies, music and more. A constant diet of sensuality is being served. A barrage of evil thoughts assaults us daily. A deadly war between good and evil is raging. The battleground is not only in the heavens; it's also being waged between your ears. These are the days when Christians are being pressed upon from every angle.

Thankfully, God has left us His survival guide for the last days. We were warned in 2 Timothy 3:1 that “in the last days perilous times will come.” The Greek word *chalepos*, translated here as “perilous times,” is used twice in the New Testament—once in this verse, and once in Matthew 8:28, where it describes two demon-possessed men as being “extremely fierce.” It is the same word in each verse.¹

These are perilous, fierce times. Our world is facing moral crisis, spiritual crisis, social crisis, financial crisis and international crisis. It feels as though the world is going wild and nations are collapsing. To paraphrase Paul's description of the last days in 2 Timothy 3:2–5, “People will live for self alone. They will boast. They will be arrogant and proud and haughty, and children will be disobedient to parents. They will be *unholy*, *unthankful*, *unloving* and *unforgiving*.” This is the Generation of *Uns*.

Don't let this discourage you. Things that seem out of our control are still in God's control.

God is in complete control, no matter what's going on in your life and in our world. You have not escaped His gaze. Because the world is not getting any better, because it's only getting worse, the Word of God must be where you and I focus our attention.

God wants you to be saturated with His Word and motivated by the Holy Spirit so you will be ready for the battle. He wants you to

do more than survive these trying times. He wants you to thrive in these last days. So, how do we overcome when we feel overwhelmed, outnumbered, out-resourced and out of options?

If you're experiencing trouble, realize that the Lord Himself may be bringing you into the discipline of divine disturbance. All of us like it easy. We don't want any difficulty. We like the nest, don't we? But God has a purpose for disturbing our comfort and security. He wants us to discover our wings of faith. He wants us to know the joy of flying. God will often humble those He chooses to exalt. When

God is going to use you greatly, there will be seasons where He'll allow you to hurt deeply.

God has a purpose for disturbing our comfort and security. He wants us to discover our wings of faith. He wants us to know the joy of flying.

Your abasement is God's plan for advancement.

The Roman emperor Diocletian executed thousands of Christians, making sure they died in excruciating pain. He also banned the Bible by confiscating and burning as many as he could. Over

the ashes of thousands of Bibles, he erected a monument that said in Latin, *Extincto nomine Christianorum*, which translated means "The name of Christians is now extinct." Twenty-five years later, the emperor Constantine declared the Bible to be God's Word. He remarked that it was infallible and that he would rule his entire kingdom by it. The Bible is the incorruptible Word of God. No matter how things seem, God's Word will prevail.

Before COVID, a lot of us were comfortably blessed. But God allowed our nests to be busted up. Job was familiar with that kind of scenario. He had a nice family, a successful business, good health, a blessed marriage. Then he lost it all. Satan did the busting up, but God allowed it. Through this turmoil, Job had to answer three questions—questions we also must face sooner or later:

1. *Can God be trusted when you're submerged in suffering?* Job lost his family, his finances, his physical health, even his reputation. But in the midst of the unimaginable loss, he learned how to praise God like never before. Faith is not about escaping suffering. Faith is enduring suffering through praise. Job made up his mind that he could trust God even when he was submerged in suffering.
2. *Can God be trusted when people you love forsake you?* Job wrote, "My relatives have failed, and my close friends have forgotten me" (Job 19:14). Have you ever been deeply hurt by close friends or family who said cruel things about you? Has your wife or husband abandoned you? Have your children cut you off? Has someone you trusted turned on you? Like Job, you must see that there is One who will never leave or forsake you. Especially when you're going through the darkest of days.
3. *Can you trust God when you're walking through extreme darkness?* Job was in absolute darkness. Are you there right now? He didn't have a clue what God was doing. Job thought God owed him some answers, but God never answered his questions. He just let Job keep walking in darkness. Can you trust God when He gives you no explanations and no light? God eventually did remind Job of His sovereignty, sufficiency and sympathy. And Job responded with praise. God restored Job double. And if you have the faith of Job, God will do the same for you.

In the midst of his trouble, heartbreak, misery, sorrow and difficulties, Job responded, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him" (Job 13:15). And if you'll trust God, as old Job did, God will prove Himself faithful, for all of heaven holds its breath in expectation of what your answer will be to this question of trust.

Even when you don't feel loved, God loves you. He is a personal God; He knows your name. And He is a purposeful God; He made you for a purpose. He is going to watch over and take care of you and your family. You are a chosen vessel for such a time as this.

If you've been feeling as if the battles you've been fighting the past few years have gotten a lot harder, there's a reason. Is the pull to click on that inappropriate website more powerful than ever? The urge to pick up what you've left behind stronger? The weight on your shoulders heavier? Does your heart race faster than you can remember? There's a reason.

Jesus is coming—and soon. But before that happens, the enemy's goal is to take out as many believers as he can. He aims to keep us from living the life God created us to live, and from telling others about the God who loves them and knows their name. The tormenting spirits of fear, discouragement, depression and lust are on high alert, zoned in on their target—you. The more the enemy can keep you distracted and dysfunctional, the less you will access your potential in the times God needs you the most—the last days.

When you read the words *end times*, what comes to mind? A nightmare? A fairy tale? Do you get overwhelmed and blank out? Or do you roll your eyes because you've heard this a hundred times before?

The Bible teaches that the end times should be a major part of our belief system. Unfortunately, for many it seems to be a scary, controversial, offensive or overwhelming topic. But the Church cannot stay silent about the end times any longer. If we ignore the truth about the Second Coming, we are teaching an incomplete gospel. We are also cheating ourselves and the next generation out of being prepared for the return of Christ.


Without understanding the full Gospel, life becomes about the here and now. Believers forget that they are responsible to witness to others about the free gift of salvation and the consequences for those who do not receive the Savior. And it's not always because

we're selfish or trying to get ahead. Often, we forget because we are just overwhelmed!


We're so entrenched in the deadly traps of this world that the Second Coming of Jesus is the last thing on our mind. I mean, don't we have enough to deal with? Our focus is solely on survival. We're trying to make it through the day without reaching for a sniff or a sip, a click or a call, a binge or a spending spree, a panic attack or lethargy.

But God doesn't call us to survive. He calls us to overcome.

I wrote this book because deep in my spirit I sensed a lack of knowledge in the Church about the Second Coming of Jesus. I am also witnessing the spirit of Jezebel at work in the forms of lust, fear, discouragement and depression. Jesus Himself foretold the appearance of her legacy in Revelation 2, an idea I'll begin to explore in Part III of this book. Never before has there been such an epidemic of broken families and marriages, and of depressed Christians who feel overwhelmed just at the thought of going on.



**God doesn't call us
to survive. He calls
us to overcome.**



And yet, as Jesus told the ones who followed Him, do not be troubled. God has equipped you for this very moment.

The future is charged with enormous opportunity. We must look for Jesus daily and live as though He could come now. We must also occupy and allow God to use us, and to free us from the depression that rages, the addiction that whispers and the despair that seeks to eliminate our existence.

God has permitted you and me to live in this season of prophetic history. Let's strive to live well, no matter what the headlines, network news or social media outlets blare. Yes, there are giants out there. But remember that God has already given you what you need to fight them.

We're in a war. Some say it's a political war. Others say a cultural war or a war of ideas. More than all of those wars, we are in a spiritual war. And we can't win this war until we expose an enemy. What is really behind the abortion industry? The narcotic cartels? What drives the producers of porn? What motivates the sexual perversion and confusion that is so widespread in our nation and world? There is a mastermind behind it all: Satan himself.

Every generation before now has seen some of the signs of the end times come to pass. Yet we are the first generation forced to acknowledge that nearly every single end-time biblical prophecy has occurred, and that Jesus Christ could come at any minute.

We need to live as if we believe that. We need to live as if we have overcome, as if we are more than conquerors.

You may not be totally convinced that we are living in the last days. Maybe you're thinking, *But wait, Pastor Jentezen, I've already heard this before!* Did someone you know from a previous generation believe Jesus was coming in their time, but it didn't happen? In fact, don't many religious leaders try to convince us every year or decade or generation that this particular time is the end? Maybe you are drowning in a deluge of past warnings about the last days, without confirmation of prophetic truth.

My father, Pastor Billy Franklin, believed that Jesus was returning, and could return in his lifetime. I have been in ministry since I was a teenager and have always believed that the Lord was returning at some point, and that He might do so in my lifetime. With several generations before us believing that the Lord would return, why do I believe that the return of the Messiah is imminent?

Because we have crossed the Rubicon.

In ancient Rome, the Rubicon was a small waterway in northern Italy that marked the northernmost boundary of Rome proper. For a general to cross the boundary with his army meant an act of hostility—civil war, in fact. According to Roman law, crossing the

Rubicon was treason, punishable by death. In 49 BC Julius Caesar was a young general making a name for himself in what we now call France. In another part of the republic, General Pompey was acquiring territory in the east and south. Jealousy and strife divided these two leaders. When Caesar approached the Rubicon, he knew his options: Turn back and retreat, or cross and expect a fight. “Advance!” Caesar commanded his troops. “Let us go where the omens of the Gods and the crimes of our enemies summon us! The die is now cast!”² His crossing brought the onset of war and the death of Pompey, and it threatened the very existence of the Republic of Rome.

Today, the phrase “crossing the Rubicon” means to pass the point of no return. I believe this is where we are in the world today. We have crossed the line as it relates to prophecy, forging alignments and enacting laws that are contrary to the laws of God.

We crossed a Rubicon when prayer and the Bible were removed from public school. Our laws concerning legalized abortion are another example of crossing a Rubicon. Legalized abortion has been set in stone in America for 49 years. Abortion is not only legal up to 24 weeks of gestation (as in aborting a baby carried by a mother six months pregnant); some states have legalized it up until birth. We crossed a Rubicon when gay marriage was legalized and the White House was lit up with all the colors of the rainbow.

In this era of “cancel culture,” what is right is called wrong, and what is evil is called good. Why don’t we talk about this more? Why so secret? The cancel culture of silence hit the Church long before it engulfed the nation. It said, “Shut up about the Rapture. Shut up about end times. Shut up about heaven and hell. Shut up about it, because it’s not in season and it hasn’t been for over twenty years.” A dangerous silence washed over the Church and its pastors, teachers and families.

There is great risk in preaching against the moral decline that is all around us today. Even in writing this book, I felt a pressure not to

go on record saying something is wrong or immoral, knowing that this could be used as a headline to discredit me. But how can I not say what is true? I still dare to say that same-sex marriage is unbiblical. God still declares abortion to be the taking of an innocent life.

America has officially entered the “days of Lot,” which is evident when you read Genesis 19. Because the signs of Christ’s return are parallel to the days of Lot, these laws that have propelled us across the Rubicon may never be undone. Sadly, some of them are accepted and practiced even in some religious circles. When we look carefully at the original Greek words recorded in a statement Christ made, we find another interesting clue in connection with these national laws, this time in regard to the days of Noah. The verse reads: “For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark” (Matthew 24:38).

Why is marriage alluded to twice? To cover the wide variety of “marriages” seen in our day. In the verse it speaks of “marrying” and “giving in marriage.” The word *marrying* here in Greek is *gameo*, which in general is a word used for marriage. Since this is a “days of Noah” sign, it could refer to marrying someone of either sex. The second phrase, “giving in marriage,” refers more to a man who gives his daughter away to the man she is marrying. Since the fall of Adam and Eve in Eden, there has always been a sin nature within men and women, creating a clash between the flesh and the spirit. When we examine all the verses Christ spoke and the apostles recorded concerning what will unfold in the last days, however, clearly we are the first generation to see so many definite fulfillments.

We have now arrived at the acceleration of end-time events, many of which have been initiated in our generation and cannot be reversed!

While the world forecasts disaster, if you read the entirety of the end-times prophecy in the Bible, there’s good news, great hope and

a plan of escape for God's people. It all comes down to this simple question: "Whose report will you believe?"

In the last days, people will be starving for God's Word. But as believers, we refuse to participate in that famine. We're going to consume and believe God's Word over everything that we're going through. God said, "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:8).

Matthew 24:6–8 warns that in the end,

You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

That's a bad report for sure. Then the very same chapter says, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world" (verse 14). That's an amazing report of revival! These two passages are in the same chapter, and both are 100 percent true. So we can focus on the good report, not just the bad report.

As a believer in Jesus Christ, I choose to focus on the good report. Think positively about the Father's blessings, goodness and faithfulness over your life. Always believe the report of the Lord. This is how we overcome in overwhelming times.

To help you overcome in these times, here is what you can expect from the rest of this book. In Part I, "Destined to Overcome," we will talk about how we are part of biblical prophecy and how, as we journey through life, there is a greater purpose at play. Then we will join Jesus and His disciples on a Temple tour that takes us through the words He spoke to them, and so also to us today, when He uncovered the signs of the last days (see Matthew 24). In that

exchange, Jesus provided us with what I call 5 Steps to Overcoming through Overwhelming Times—steps that will help us face and rise above life’s turmoil and troubles.

In Part II, “5 Steps for Overcomers,” we will look more closely at the 5 Steps individually, which are *look within*, *look to Him* (Jesus), *look ahead*, *look out* and *look up*. Each step will not only help you and me overcome the chaos of the everyday, but will also enable us to embrace the mystery of the end times and encourage others to do the same.

Part III, “Get Up, Get Out, Get Free,” takes us on a deep dive into the four characteristics of the end-time spirit that is attacking the Body of Christ today through its multiple manifestations of fear, discouragement, depression and lust. While the enemy desires to manipulate our minds, keep us captive to sin in our bodies and bring death to our spirits, God gives us the power to keep this from happening. My final chapter gives you an invitation to get up, get out and get free. New life can spring forth from addiction, anxiety, despair or whatever obstacles are overwhelming you in this moment. Freedom awaits.

Let’s approach the last days not with chaotic living, fear or ignorance, but armed with knowledge and bursting with power because of Christ, who has already won!

Are you ready?

PART I

TO DESTINED OVERCOME

Have you ever been through a season in your life where you just can't understand it? Where you try tracing the line of your past to your present, but it doesn't seem to tell you anything about your future? Often, we forget that our life has an Author—a loving Father in heaven who chose to write our name into His story. And He wants to tell a fascinating story through our days . . . if we'll let Him.

In Part I, we're going to uncover the truth that while you're walking, God is working. God is over all, in charge, and you are on a prophetic journey toward His great purpose for your life. This is true, even when the chaos of life erupts and the signs of the last days flash before your eyes.

We will also take a little Temple tour with Jesus and hear His response to questions about what life will be like in the days leading

DESTINED TO OVERCOME

up to His return. I will introduce you to 5 Steps I believe He gave us that will help you and me explore who we are in Him and how we live in these end times because of it. I want to show you how whatever overwhelms you might be the very thing that leads you to know Him better.



1

When You're Walking, God Is Working

Imagine that you are a basket maker who has been approached to make a special basket for a special purpose. You weave together papyrus reeds, overlapping one over another, then coat the basket with a double application of tar and pitch to prevent water from leaking through. You seal every crack with an artist's perfection. The basket is paid for and collected, and you never see it again. Years later, you discover how that very same piece of craftsmanship saved the life of an infant named Moses, marked by the Almighty to be Israel's greatest deliverer.

Imagine that you lived centuries ago in a town called Bethlehem. A clan of shepherds is concerned about the wild bears and lions that are attacking the flocks. The shepherds ask you for help in making them a crude weapon, something small enough to carry yet strong enough to defeat these predators. You fasten a piece of woven wool between two strips of leather and admire your finished product. Your name will never be spoken of as the creator of this weapon, but this slingshot will go down in history, made famous by a teenage warrior named David when he used it to slay Goliath.

Over a thousand years later, in the same city, imagine you are the owner of a village inn. A major tax has been imposed, and every family must return to the family's birthplace to register for a census. You hear a knock on the door. Before you stands a man, along with his pregnant wife sitting on a donkey. She is ready to go into labor at any time. They ask for a room, but you have none available. You offer them all you have left, a stable where you keep the animals. You are unaware that you have just provided the birthplace where the Messiah of the world will be born. Your stable will be celebrated every year when the world remembers the birth of the infant Christ.

What would it be like to participate in an event that was predicted in the Bible thousands of years ago? You might not even fully realize it in the moment. As far as you're concerned, you're just doing something you always do. Or, you might feel helpless and hopeless, and yet one act of obedience can spark the outburst of an ordained journey. Would you recognize God at work in a divine moment as you walk it out?

You Are on a Prophetic Journey

You are part of biblical prophecy at this very moment. Our generation has been marked with prophetic promises. God is allowing us to see events unfolding that the ancient prophets only saw in visions and dreams.

It's easy to forget that God is orchestrating behind the scenes as we go about our business in the process of living our lives. He has sent you on a prophetic journey. If you trust Him, you can know that He is in control and that He holds you in His hand.

Read that last line again. Does it comfort you or frighten you? You are reading this book for a reason. You can't take another sleepless night. You can't kick a habit that has morphed into a full-blown addiction that is destroying your relationships with those around you.

Food is more than a comfort; it is a source of security, yet it never satisfies that hunger that grows deeper each passing day.

Take a breath. Deeply, this time. Your story can change, right now.

One encounter, an inconvenient detour, even the desperation of wanting to heal from a trauma, can bring you one step closer to where God wants you to be—whole and healed, filled with joy and purpose, ready and able to carry out whatever mission He has planned for your life. He is always at work, even if you've numbed yourself to the point that you can't even see it anymore.

God is still working it out while you are walking it out. And if you are available and willing, He can give you the tools you need to overcome the nightmares that are plaguing you and keeping you from the ultimate destiny He has prepared for you.

I think of Saul before he even knew he would become the first king of Israel. At the time, he was a young man living in his father's house, gulping down a bowl of cereal when his dad tasked him with a mission. The dad didn't tell the son to take out the trash or pick up some toilet paper. He told Saul that three donkeys were missing and that it was Saul's job to find them.

"Please take one of the servants with you, and arise, go and look for the donkeys," Saul's father said (1 Samuel 9:3). The Bible doesn't tell us what the relationship was like between father and son, but if Saul was a typical teenager, he probably rolled his eyes and groaned in response. You know, just because his father told him to do something.

Saul had no idea at that point of the destiny God had for his life. He had no clue that the mission his father was sending him on would culminate in his being anointed the first king of Israel. He didn't know that he was on the brink of beginning a prophetic journey for a whole nation that would produce a Messiah. And that one day, this Messiah would come back and that His Kingdom would never end.

Saul just thought he was doing what he had to do, obeying his annoying father and doing another dumb chore. So he and a servant

went on a journey, which lasted three days, to look for the missing donkeys. The men searched the land for these braying animals and could not find them. Saul was ready to give up. He told his companion, “Come, let us return, lest my father cease caring about the donkeys and become worried about us” (1 Samuel 9:5).

But the servant had a better idea: “Look now, there is in this city a man of God, and he is an honorable man; all that he says surely comes to pass. So let us go there; perhaps he can show us the way that we should go. . . . Come, let us go to the seer’; for he who is now called a prophet was formerly called a seer” (verses 6, 9).

While Saul was moving in one direction, God was also moving in another; He had already spoken to the prophet about the young man’s arrival. I love the fact that God was working on both sides. He was setting up the right situation, the right person, the right place and the right time. And when God was ready . . . a collision of destiny.

This is what it means to be on a prophetic journey. It happened to Saul. It happened to the basket weaver, the slingshot maker and the innkeeper. And right now, it’s happening to you. It’s time to root out what has been holding you hostage from God’s plan.

The day before Saul and the servant decided to seek out the prophet/seer, Samuel, God had told the prophet,

Tomorrow about this time I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him commander over My people Israel, that he may save My people from the hand of the Philistines; for I have looked upon My people, because their cry has come to Me.

1 Samuel 9:16

The Bible says that the Lord “told Samuel in his ear” about Saul coming (verse 15). This is so powerful. We can’t speak if we don’t hear. We need a sensitive ear, like the prophet. We need to listen for God’s words.

While Saul and his servant were on their way to the city to look for the prophet, Samuel was walking toward them from the opposite direction:

So when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said to him, “There he is, the man of whom I spoke to you. This one shall reign over My people.” Then Saul drew near to Samuel in the gate, and said, “Please tell me, where is the seer’s house?”

Verses 17–18

And suddenly, the paths of two men, strangers to one another, on journeys of their own and with separate agendas, hurtled into one another with power enough to unlock the prophecy of a future King with an eternal Kingdom.

Samuel answered Saul and told him,

I am the seer. Go up before me to the high place, for you shall eat with me today; and tomorrow I will let you go and will tell you all that is in your heart.

Verse 19

And before Saul could get a word in, Samuel added (in paraphrase), “Oh yeah, and those donkeys you’re looking for? Don’t worry about them. They’re found and taken care of, waiting for you to take them back home.”

The three men broke bread. Saul and his servant spent the night at the prophet’s house. The next day, Samuel made Saul send the servant back home ahead of him, and then began to prophesy over and anoint Saul as the first king of Israel.

You may not see it or even believe it yet, but you are on a prophetic journey.

You may not see it or even believe it yet, but you are on a prophetic journey. Sometimes, it takes losing donkeys to discover what God’s plan was all along.

Looking for Donkeys, Finding the Kingdom

God orders our steps. We might think we're doing one thing, but there's a purpose underneath what we see on the surface. What you are going through right now—the depression, the grief, the discouragement, the disappointment, the sexual addiction, what the enemy is trying to use to destroy you—can be the very thing God will use to lead you where you are supposed to be.

In Saul's case, God used a loss in his life to shift him in a prophetic direction where he would encounter a prophet who would forever change his life, and the word of the Lord would then be actualized. This young man went out looking for donkeys and came back home with the kingdom.

Something was missing in Saul's life. Are you in a season where something is missing? Have you recently lost something? Has your marriage just ended? Have you said good-bye to a loved one? Has a dream that you longed for and worked tirelessly for been rerouted in a different direction? Sometimes, what is missing in our lives is the very reason we find God's plan for our lives.

God can use what we've lost to get us back on our prophetic journey. Saul was chasing donkeys, in his mind a trivial and unimportant assignment compared to the magnitude of his calling. You may be on your third kind of medication to help stabilize your moods. You may be defeated by the number of starts and stops you've had on your journey to recovery. Many times, the challenges of this life are actually a setup for God's next assignment for you. God can use what you don't have and what you're looking for—like peace, joy or meaning—to return you to your destiny or even to help you discover it.

You may think you're chasing donkeys, but you're about to come home with the Kingdom. The prophet told Saul, in effect, "It's time to stop chasing donkeys! They're just distractions!" God had something much bigger for Saul than chasing donkeys. Saul would be king.

We can miss what God has for us because we're chasing what's unimportant. The enemy wants to keep us feeling anxious, keep us occupied with distractions, paralyze us with confusing messages and render us helpless. But God has placed us here for such a time as this.

It's time for you to stop chasing donkeys.

I believe the Lord has a word for you if you are reading this book. I believe He wants you to know that He has already taken care of the issues of your life. You may have no idea how God is about to use you, but you can be sure that the enemy wants to limit you. God has amazing things planned for you. Don't make the mistake of getting caught up chasing donkeys when you are headed for the throne. You are a king or a queen in the Kingdom of God.

God is setting appointments, opening doors and arranging finances for you and your near future. God is about to take you into your most productive season, if you'll stop chasing donkeys and stop hiding in your own insecurity.

After Samuel anointed Saul and declared he would be king, the big day came. All of Israel gathered by the tens of thousands to crown Saul as their first king. It was a huge celebration. The men were celebrating in the streets; the women were dancing with timbrels and tambourines; the children had streamers in their hands. There was one problem—Saul was nowhere to be found.

Where was their king? They announced his name again, but still he did not come forth: "Therefore they inquired of the LORD further, 'Has the man come here yet?' And the LORD answered, 'There he is, hidden among the equipment'" (1 Samuel 10:22). The word *equipment* here was originally the term for baggage. Saul was so insecure that he could not step into what God was calling him to do. Instead, he went and hid in a pile of baggage.

God is about to take you into your most productive season, if you'll stop chasing donkeys and stop hiding in your own insecurity.

Like Saul, we will miss what God has for us if we aren't willing to let go of our baggage. This is one of the ways the enemy will try to keep you from receiving the blessings of God. You have to stop chasing donkeys that don't really matter in the big picture of God's plan, because that kind of baggage from the past will hold you back from your calling. (You'll read in Part III about some of the baggage that can hold us back. And when you get there, you'll learn there is a better way.)

It's not about your strength or your ability; it's about trusting God. And before you can even begin to roll your eyes or interrupt me with a "But, Pastor," you should know that God doesn't accept excuses when we are on a prophetic journey.

The One, the Place, the Time

You are the one. This is the place. Now is the time.

When faced with God's calling, however, I find that most people hide behind a multitude of excuses about why they are not the man or woman for the job: *I can't because . . .*

I'm too young.

I'm too old.

I don't know what I'm doing.

I'm not worthy.

I can't get clean.

I can't get out of debt.

I can't stop struggling with depression/anxiety.

When Samuel first began to prophesy over Saul, the young man refused to accept his destiny. Saul made excuses: "Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least

of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?" (1 Samuel 9:21). *I'm the least of the least from the most dysfunctional family in town.* But God knew what He was doing then, and He knows what He is doing today.

Your excuses are what God wants to use! He will take your excuses and make them opportunities. God has a purpose for your life, filled with assignments that require your unique DNA.

I want you to get three truths into your heart today. Make these a personal revelation:

1. You are the one.
2. This is the place.
3. Now is the time.

Scripture is replete with people whom God came to with a magnificent plan for their life. And yet, their responses were the same: *Not me.* Take Moses, for instance. When God spoke to him through a burning bush, the man's response was a list of excuses: *I'm slow of speech. No one will listen to me.* The same thing happened with Gideon. The angel of the Lord approached Gideon and, before tasking him with an assignment, called him a mighty man of valor. Gideon's reply? *You have the wrong guy. I'm the least of the least.*

These are just two of a plethora of characters in the Bible who said, *I'm not the one. This is not the place. Now is not the time.* God had to turn the situation around so these people could understand that they were the one, that was the place, and it was the right time.

On January 13, 1982, Air Florida Flight 90 crashed into the 14th Street Bridge seconds after takeoff from Washington National Airport. The plane landed in the frozen Potomac River. Out of 79 people aboard, only 5 survived. Lenny Skutnik, a federal employee, stood

nearby. A bystander in a crowd of hundreds of others, when he heard the screams of passengers trying to survive in the icy water as rescue efforts were underway, he tore off his coat and dove into the frigid river. He was able to save a woman and bring her safely to the riverbank.

And Skutnik didn't know it, but according to one report there was a woman in her apartment who was watching the live newscast, and she turned to her two little children and said, "That looks like something your father would do." She found out three hours later that it was indeed their father, her husband! Are you the one? Are you the person who will stand up and say, "I am the one to do something about this. This is the place, and now is the time"?

Alfred Nobel is known to us today as the scientist who established the Nobel Peace Prize to recognize people's achievements in physics, chemistry, physiology, medicine and literature, or for their work toward peace between the nations. But according to historian Oscar J. Falnes, Nobel's family name was once "associated not with the arts of peace but with the arts of war."¹

Though Nobel never told this story publicly, historians suggest that his benevolent motivation sprang up from an error in the local paper. One day, Alfred was reading a French newspaper and stumbled upon a scathing obituary about . . . himself! In this obituary, Alfred was labeled as a "merchant of death."² Known for inventing and developing explosives (including dynamite) used in both construction and warfare, Alfred was horrified at the legacy he had supposedly left. While the newspaper's error of mistaken identity was corrected—the paper had meant to identify Alfred's brother, Ludwig, who had died—Alfred had an awakening of sorts. According to biographer Kenne Fant, Alfred "became so obsessed with his posthumous reputation that he rewrote his last will, bequeathing most of his fortune to a cause upon which no future obituary writer would be able to cast aspersions."³ Nobody today thinks of Alfred

Nobel as the inventor of explosives. We think of him as a man who advanced peace through the Nobel Peace Prize.

You can redetermine your legacy. You can't redo what you've done, but you can turn yourself around, starting now, and live a life that counts for the Kingdom. I want the same spirit that gripped Alfred Nobel to grip you and me—I *am the one*. *This is the place*. *Now is the time*.

It's so easy to think that God is going to do something in distant places or at another time in our life, but the Bible tells us that today is the day of salvation (see 2 Corinthians 6:2). And this is the place!

When Moses and the people of Israel were wandering in the wilderness, in one of many instances the people started to whine and complain: "We're dying of thirst!" "We're starving!" "There's nothing to eat or drink!" "We're tired!" "It's hot!" (See Numbers 21:4–5.) Plenty of them were thinking, *This is ridiculous*. *Why on earth did we listen to Moses and leave Egypt? Let's go back*.

But God said, "This is the place." And in the middle of the wilderness, without food and without drink for the people, God told Moses to stay. More than that, He told him to do something else: "Get out the Levitical choir, Moses. It's time to start singing!"

Here's how I imagine this pathetic scene. These people are out in the desert. Dust everywhere. Hot as fire. They have been on the move for a while and are weary. But the choir gets up and starts singing:

Spring up, O well!—Sing to it!—the well that the princes made, that the nobles of the people dug, with the scepter and with their staffs.

Numbers 21:17–18 ESV

And as they sing, the priests start tapping the dry dirt with their staffs. *Tap. Tap. Tap*. All they are doing, it seems, is creating a cloud of dust. Some start coughing. Others start choking. But they continue to pound the earth, and the choir continues to sing. I can imagine

one of the priests pounding his staff into the ground, but this time it gets stuck. He can't pull it out of the ground, so he calls Moses over. Both of them grasp the staff with all their might and jerk that rod out of the ground. But wait—the end of the stick is dripping wet. Moses says, “Hit it again!” And with the background of “Spring up, O well!” water starts gushing out of the dry ground.

Stop thinking that God is only going to use you after you get married, when you find the perfect job, once you move to the perfect city, after the fighting stops in your family or once you're finally over that temptation. Start saying, “I am the one. This is the place. Now is the time.”

The author of Ecclesiastes wrote that a living dog is better than a dead lion (see Ecclesiastes 9:4). As powerful as a lion is, if he's dead, his power is nothing more than a lost opportunity. For him, it's over. I do not want to be a dead lion. I would rather be a living dog. As small a dog as I may be, if I'm breathing, there is still life ahead. I still have a chance.

A present opportunity plagued with problems is better than an awesome opportunity that has passed. Now is the time! The people of Israel refused to march into the Promised Land because they listened to the ten spies. Moses tried to intervene for them and asked God to pardon them, but God basically answered, “You're too late. I'm not going to use you. I've already chosen another generation to enter the Promised Land” (see Numbers 14:18–23).

Again, now is the time! Did you know that if you wait until it's too late, you can miss your destiny? You can miss your purpose? You can miss the plan God has for your life? “Now is the time. Today is the day.” When are we going to quit saying, “One day, we're going to do something; one day, we're going to make a difference; one day, we're going to really win the world; one day, we're going to change our nation; one day, we're going to influence this country for God”? And when are we going to say “Now is the time”?

This is the moment! This is the place! There will never be a greater time to give your best, to give your all, to pour your life out on God, than right now.

You are the one. This is the place. Now is the time.

Awaken to your destiny today. You were created to be the salt and the light of the earth. You can't do anything about your past, but you can rewrite the rest of your life. It starts right now.

What are you waiting for?