

Foreword by Grace Valentine

**purpose
doesn't
pause**

**Finding Freedom From
What's Holding You Back**

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chapter 1

what if we aren't stuck?

*"Here is the only thing that will
ever get us there."¹*

Christine Caine

Have you ever experienced a season of paralyzing confusion? A moment in life when you just feel *stuck* and don't know what to do next? Maybe you're going through a gut-wrenching breakup, an unexpected loss, or a mistake that feels unforgivable. Or perhaps this time of uncertainty roots from an unexpected rejection, something good coming to an end, or nothing going as planned.

The list of possible reasons you've picked up this book goes on and on. But the bottom line is that confusion can get the best of all of us. Regardless of what brings us here today, I'm betting we've all at one time or another (or maybe all the time!) found ourselves feeling numb to the things we used to enjoy, full of anxiety about what

steps to take next, and so exhausted that we don't know how to purposefully show up anymore.

Isn't it crazy how easily this feeling of defeat can sneak into our lives? That's exactly how confusion greeted me.

I'd spent five years after college building a successful career in the corporate world, and all had been going well. I'd happily worked for one employer and had never experienced anything like the frustrations that came when I accepted a new position within that same company.

Red flags started popping up the first week in that new role, and as time went on, the flags only got bigger and brighter (think maraschino cherries). By week three, I learned my new team hadn't been including me in meetings because they were unsure of my role. No wonder my calendar had remained so clear!

This is when confusion set in. My boss had clearly defined my role to the team numerous times, so their excuses weren't adding up. Did they want me to fail? Were they all against me? Why was this happening?

Another month of being excluded was painful enough, but then a senior leader confronted me with a particularly hurtful comment: "Why were you hired for this role?" He went on to tell me that he didn't think my skill set matched their needs and that he wasn't sure how to use me on their project.

As you can imagine, my confidence level reached an all-time low and my confusion level continued to rise.

For months I felt rejected, unvalued, and lonely. My world as I knew it was falling apart. Day after day, I found myself wishing I could return to my previous position. Accepting this new role was

supposed to be a move up in the world. It wasn't supposed to make me feel defeated and burned out.

It was taking everything in me not to quit.

a random, life-changing bike ride

As crazy as it sounds, a Peloton ride changed my perspective. One night, out of stress and frustration from yet another bad day at work, I hopped on my dusty Peloton exercise bike to take a spin and de-stress. The video class had already started when my husband, Will, walked in to find that I was just sitting there on the bike, watching the class play out on the screen.

He laughed and said, "Hope, you have to move your legs."

We both cracked up. I knew he was right, but I was so mentally exhausted that mustering up the energy to move my legs was no small feat.

There had to be another way to ride out this confusion, right? What was I missing here?

Here's what happened after laughing over my "exercise" routine. I stopped being an observer of the class, I turned up the resistance on the bike, and I gave it my all like my Peloton instructor was telling me to do. As my posture went from defeated to determined, I was finally ready to take on the challenge coming my way.

That's when an aha moment hit me. How Will had found me sitting on my bike was exactly how I had been sitting in my life. Confused, exhausted, defeated ... *stuck!*

Just like in the spin class, I had become a bystander observing life going on around me. Instead of showing up at my job and giving

it my all to work through the challenges, I had been letting the resistance stifle me.

That's when I realized I could make a different choice. I could choose to fully show up and combat the challenges facing me at work. And in life.

What might happen if we all dared to shift perspective? What if this season of confusion could transform us in ways we can't yet imagine? What if this season is challenging us to show up fully to the life God has given us?

What if, instead of being observers, we choose to live every day as if our PURPOSE DOESN'T PAUSE?

You and I are going to share this season together, but we aren't going to sit still and watch other people live out their purpose. And we aren't going to end this journey in the same way we start. Instead, we're going to shift our posture from defeated to determined. We're going to get unstuck. We're going to show up and live our true purpose, just as God has called us to do. Because life is short, and God doesn't press pause.

the problem with confusion

The week after my Peloton awakening, I arrived at work with a new attitude. I was finally ready to do whatever it took to turn my story around.

Fortuitously, a Zoom meeting was already on the calendar, so I decided to take that opportunity to share my concerns with a trusted mentor. Before I could finish the story, he looked at me and said, "You aren't stuck, Hope. You just think you are."

Maybe my mentor was on to something.

After spending some time with Google, I realized I wasn't the only one who had experienced this "stuck" feeling. I also learned that we tend to respond to uncertainty by "spontaneously generating plausible explanations."²

In other words, what if my mentor was right not just about me but also about you? Maybe we aren't really *stuck* at all. Maybe we just think we are.

With this new knowledge, I started to believe that God had put me in that position on purpose, for a purpose. I chose to believe that He was preparing me for what He would be calling me to step into next.

Perhaps if I tried to bypass this difficult experience, I would miss out on something God was planning to use for His good and His glory.

Coming to this belief was not short on pain or suffering. For months, online job searches had become my hobby. I applied for job after job only to be greeted daily with the automated message: "Don't be discouraged, but we're going with someone else."

I cried out to God, "If You want me here, I'll stay. Close any door that isn't supposed to be opened."

Sure enough, every possible door slammed in my face. But then I realized that nothing else was working out because He had placed me there intentionally. And He was using this frustrating experience to do some important work in my heart.

Eventually my husband and in-laws encouraged me to tell my boss how the tension at work was impacting not just my job performance but also my overall well-being.

After a lot of prayer, I went for it. My boss's response blew me away. She told me that she had been in a similar place at one point in

her career, and she wanted to be there for me like she wished someone had been there for her. She offered to change up my responsibilities, and she encouraged me to have a conversation with the senior leader who was constantly questioning me.

Before I had the painful conversation with him, I again asked God to be with me. The stomach butterflies leading up to that conversation were supersized. I don't know if I've ever felt so nervous. When we finally connected, he apologized. He told me what he valued about my skill set and said he wished I had talked to him about my concerns earlier.

For the first time in a long time, I felt free. I still was confused about why this was happening to me, but I started to see that my mentor had been right all along. I wasn't stuck. I'd just thought I was.

What if the same is true for you?

when problems take us by surprise

Most of us spend far too much time trying to understand why a painful experience is happening to us.

One evening after work, I sat down on the cozy gray couch in my living room and opened my Bible to 1 Peter 4–5. Have you ever read a certain verse and felt as if God was speaking directly to you?

Before you read these verses, it's important to understand the context behind the book of 1 Peter. As one of Jesus' first disciples, Peter wrote this letter to encourage Christians who were being persecuted in brutal ways. He reminded them that suffering is a part of Christian life but that God would strengthen them, and glory would come through their hope in Christ.

Let's look at a few verses that stood out as I read these two chapters in 1 Peter:

- “Dear friends, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice inasmuch as you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed” (1 Peter 4:12–13).
- “Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:6–7).
- “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings” (1 Peter 5:8–9).
- “And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (1 Peter 5:10).

I love how Peter’s message still speaks truth to us today. He tells us **not to be surprised** when sufferings hit us and explains that this is the unfortunate reality of the world we live in. We are called to live a life that looks more and more like Jesus’ every day, so why are we surprised when hard things happen to us?

We don't have to be surprised because we are equipped with faith. We don't have to fear because God is FOR us, and He will make us "strong, firm and steadfast" through our troubles (1 Peter 5:10). And we don't have to feel alone in our suffering because believers around the world are suffering along with us. We are all going through this together.

This is why it's so important to lean not on our own truth, but to lean on the Living Word—the one and only truth. As we rely on God's Word, we become equipped to step into the abundant life He created for us, showing up fully to face whatever situations He brings us to today.

See? No matter the challenge, with God on our side, we really do have everything we need to face any situation in our lives right now.

Romans 8:18 says, "For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (ESV). Jesus has already conquered death and made a way for us to spend eternity with Him. He has already given us a path to victory, so let's start living like it.

Looking back, I now see just how far God has carried me. While I was stressing over little details at work, He pointed me to a verse that made me see that things weren't really as complicated as I'd somehow believed.

As we rely on God's Word, we become equipped to step into the abundant life He created for us, showing up fully to face whatever situations He brings us to today.

Matthew 22:37–39 says best what God calls us to do: “Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

Isn't that simple? It took questioning my situation at work to understand the real role we are called to play in our everyday lives—love God and love people.

Want to know the best news? We don't have to live this out alone. Matthew 28:18–20 reads, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’” (ESV).

what's next?

Since we'll need to pivot from a posture of defeat to one of determination, why not do so together? Each chapter in *Purpose Doesn't Pause* will focus on a specific experience in our everyday lives that can leave us feeling confused and stuck. Together, we'll uncover God's truth so we can show up and fully live our purpose—to love God and love others.

After each chapter, we'll engage in a purposeful chat with a twentysomething woman who has struggled with challenges similar to ours.

This book is designed to be a community-focused experience. The ultimate hope is that it won't be a one-and-done read but




something we refer to throughout our daily lives. The more dog-eared pages, underlines, and notes in the margins ... the better!

We all know how confusion can leave us feeling, so don't feel pressured to read this book in any specific order. It's designed so you can turn to any chapter that resonates with you today and trust that the rest will be waiting for you when the time comes.

To bring this full circle, let's go back to the Peloton story. Picture this:

The bike symbolizes the journey God has given us.



-  The seat symbolizes where God has us right now.
-  The handlebars symbolize God's truth because that is where we put all our weight as we show up for the purposeful ride that God intentionally placed us on.
-  The screen showing the instructor teaching the class can symbolize how we will focus our eyes on Jesus, starting now.

What a picture. It's time to live out our purpose. Are you ready? Let's do this!