

The background of the book cover is a light pink color with a repeating pattern of stylized floral motifs and butterflies. The butterflies are in various shades of pink, orange, and yellow. The text is overlaid on this pattern.

*Conquering the Fear  
of Missing Out*

**NOW  
OVER  
NEXT**

*Hope Reagan Harris*

*Conquering the Fear  
of Missing Out*

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OVER  
NEXT**

*Hope Reagan Harris*



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Books for Courageous Women  
from David C Cook

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The background of the page is a light, monochromatic illustration featuring several butterflies of various patterns and sizes, interspersed with stylized, leafy branches and circular motifs. The overall aesthetic is soft and naturalistic.

## Chapter 1

# When We Know There Is More to Life Than This

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. However, if you look closely at the photo on the next page, which is from 2020, you'll see more than just twenty-six-year-old me on a business trip in India. Dressed for success in my striped button-down shirt with freshly highlighted blonde hair, I'm standing proudly in front of the Taj Mahal. The big smile on my face screams "I've arrived!" And I even posted this photo on social media with the caption: "Made it to the Taj!"

Leading up to this India trip, I had been traveling all around the world. My American Airlines status had upgraded me to first-class seats, and I was living the American Dream!

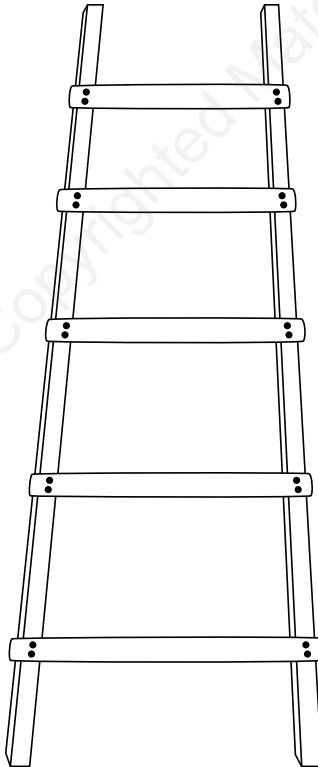
What a change from my simple small-town childhood in a community of ten thousand fellow residents. It hadn't been long since I'd



googled “Fortune 500 company” with no clue what that term even meant. But soon after I graduated from college, I would not only learn what a Fortune 500 company was, but I’d spend five years working for one. By the time this photo was taken, I had become the typical modern business leader, determined to make it to “the top of the corporate ladder.”

Can you relate? Whether you've been striving in your professional, romantic, or personal life, I bet we all have "chased" some goal along the way. And I bet, if you're anything like me, you might be caught in that cycle right now.

Let's imagine we are climbing a ladder. Each rung signifies the next step we'll have to take to reach whatever goal we're striving to achieve—whether it be more money, more success, more approval, more accolades, or more time. We all keep climbing, trying to achieve MORE, MORE, MORE! Then, and only then, will we finally be happy.



Initially, this climb can feel exhilarating. However, as we climb higher, the ladder starts swaying and wobbling. Each step feels like an empty promise, disappointing us when our expectations aren't met. We slowly begin to realize that the way our life *looks* is drastically different from how it *feels*.

When I look back at the old Hope, standing there in front of the Taj Mahal, I see a goal-driven, hardworking, and career-focused young woman who was eager to reach the next step ... and the next ... and the next ... and the next. The climb became addictive, dribbling out enough reward to keep me hooked. The more success I found, the more I wanted.

As a result, I spent years “living to work,” when I should have been “working to live.”

As much as I hate to admit it, I had become a workaholic, addicted to worldly success. I was rarely content with the moment I was in and spent most of my time focusing on the next step in front of me. As soon as I'd get a promotion, I'd turn right around and ask my boss what goals I needed to achieve to reach the next level.

I approached my career as if I were playing a game. It didn't matter how much striving it took; I was going to win. I was going to figure out a way to reach the next best thing that was always dangling in front of me.

Now, writing this from a new perspective, I realize it was never about the money or material things those promotions got me. I craved the praise and recognition that came along with them. Each accomplishment fueled my confidence and filled a void inside of me long enough to fuel me onward and upward as I continued to climb the ladder.

Work was where I found my worth and identity, so that's what I focused on. It made me feel relevant, known, loved, and purposeful. To put it as simply as possible: the old Hope had set her eyes on creating a success story for herself.

If we're being honest with each other, there's always something dangling in front of us that appears to promise a better, happier, or more fulfilling life. Maybe you long to graduate college, land your first job, find your person, earn a promotion at work, get married, have a baby, buy a house, start a company, purchase a new car, or ... fill in the blank. In today's culture, we're battling a universal epidemic that tries to trick us into chasing the *next best thing*. Can you take a guess what that epidemic is called?

Yes, we're talking about the "fear of missing out," or FOMO, as many call it.

Most of us have joked about "having major FOMO."

Maybe you've scrolled through social media posts and felt FOMO when you realized others were having fun without you.

Maybe you've watched your coworker accept a promotion and felt FOMO when you worried your big chance may have passed you by.

Maybe you've seen your friends marry, have babies, and build their dream homes, all while you've remained single, battling FOMO alone in your apartment and fearing you'll never catch up with your peers.

Most of us have felt this FEAR of missing out at least once in our lives, and many of us have allowed it to dictate our decisions. That's why I think it's time we take a serious look at FOMO—a false cultural belief that seems to be getting worse with each passing year.

To me, FOMO is the constant worry that if we don't keep up with what everyone else is doing, we might fall behind in life. It's the desire to be in the loop because we're afraid that not being part of the action could mean missing out on something important or exciting. And it's the desire to be everything for everyone, leading us to say yes when we really want to say no.

This fear doesn't only impact us emotionally; it impacts every part of our lives. FOMO can make us feel lonely, influence our ability to make sound decisions, increase our symptoms of depression and anxiety, and create sleep problems, which in turn will make us even more exhausted and overwhelmed. Let's not forget how it can impact our financial well-being by tricking us into spending money on things we haven't budgeted for.

The problem with FOMO is, we can become so busy trying to create a life worth living that we end up *missing out* on the present moment God has placed right in front of us.

It's time for us to embrace where God has us today. It's time to embrace NOW over NEXT.

## **What If We Are Holding On to What We Were Never Meant to Cling To?**

Have you ever felt so caught up in trying to keep up with others that you ended up missing out on what God was doing in that very moment of your life? I have! It's no wonder my wise eighty-seven-year-old nana says, "FOMO could make us miss a blessing."

Nana understands that we can't lose sight of who God is, who He says we are, and what He promises to do with our lives. To put it

simply: In a world where people are often anything but *present*, it's time we step into the unexpected gift of abundant life Christ has given us in this very moment.

Remember that picture of the old Hope standing in front of the Taj Mahal? I look happy, successful, living the dream! But my prayer journal entries from that time in my life captured truths the photo would have never told you:

*Something has to change. I'm feeling especially tired and weary ... There has to be more to life than this ... I'm exhausted, burned out, and wishing for retirement in my twenties ... All night I felt restless and anxious about work. This truly feels imprisoning ... God, I am literally at my wit's end. I'm extremely overwhelmed ... I lay this all at Your feet, Lord. I seriously want to point people to You. That's my heart.*

Can you see the hold FOMO had on my life at that time? FOMO holds us hostage and convinces us to keep climbing (even if the climb is making us ill). It manipulates us, saying, *Why would you stop here? You're almost to the good part! If you quit climbing, others will pass you up!*

## **There Is More to Life Than This**

Before 2020, I had been looking at life through a foggy lens. But in 2020, the fog began to clear. My perspective was starting to shift as I realized that *maybe* there was more to life than climbing

the corporate ladder. But I wasn't ready to make big adjustments in my life just yet.

If this sounds like your current situation, don't feel bad. If God met me there, He will meet you there too. The fact that you are even thinking there *might* be a better approach to life is a GREAT start. This is the place where I started to get to know God by praying and reading my Bible. I learned very quickly that the process is a *journey* (which transforms us little by little each day), not a sprint.

While still working in my corporate job, I decided on a whim to see what other career opportunities were out there. Burned out and longing for a better balance in life, I applied for my dream role in digital ministry, but when I learned it would require me to move to Oklahoma City, I withdrew my application. A cross-country relocation was not in the cards for our family.

Even though I withdrew my application, the hiring manager, Ben, reached out to have a chat. We each had a corporate background, and he wanted to learn more about what had led me to apply and what I was wrestling with in terms of the position. We agreed to stay connected, and we emailed each other two or three times a year. (This detail may seem random, but wait to see what God does with this!)

Three years later, the fog that once clouded my vision had finally lifted. My firstborn baby, Remi Claire, was born on January 19, and as most mothers understand, my entire world changed.

I finally understood that there was *definitely* more to life than chasing after every step society told me to take. The things I used to work hard for didn't fill me up anymore. In all honesty, corporate achievements now felt meaningless.

Work still went on while I was on maternity leave. I knew it would, but it felt weird. I wasn't getting calls in the evenings to help solve "mission critical" problems at work. I wasn't being asked to pull together last-minute presentations. I wasn't being praised or acknowledged for my job performance. In fact, I was on maternity leave during our company's review process, so I wasn't even able to have my annual review, a process I'd previously looked forward to as an opportunity to spotlight my achievements and climb another level up that ladder.

My time at home with Remi gave me enough space to process the way I had been living since entering corporate America in 2017. I finally accepted that enough was enough.

This much-needed shift created a moment of clarity, and I never saw life the same way again.

Suddenly, the shiny steps on the ladder lost their sparkle. I came eye to eye with all the things I had sacrificed to keep up with the climb.

Of course, transcendence never comes easy. And if it had, I wouldn't even have a story to share with you today. The truth is, life caught up with me and did everything it could to try to knock me down.

Sound relatable?

Ten weeks after giving birth to Remi, I was diagnosed with postpartum depression. For the first time in my entire life, I couldn't keep it together. I also could no longer pretend everything was fine. I wasn't fine, not even close. And I had no choice but to surrender fully to God.

This wasn't the only shocking news that was delivered to me that day. You're going to chuckle a little ... but a few weeks before

Remi came into the world, I'd applied for a promotion within my department. While I was sitting on my couch that evening, trying to process my diagnosis, I got a text from a coworker. Turns out, she had applied for the same job, and the hiring manager had recommended she reach out to me for interview advice.

It didn't take thirty seconds for me to realize this wasn't a good sign. Reluctantly, I texted her back. Even though I had no clue what God was up to, I chose to trust His plan.

A few days later, that peer reached out to me again, this time to notify me that she had been given the position over me. I had been told I was a shoo-in for that promotion. And just like that, I could do nothing but congratulate her as that door slammed in my face.

To make matters worse, I wasn't able to reach any closure or apply for any other positions at my company until my maternity leave ended. After all the time, energy, and attention I had poured into that company, I was devastated that my climb had been stopped at a time when I had NO control over the decisions being made without me.

*Even though I had no clue what God was up to, I chose to trust His plan.*

Depressed, anxious, sleep-deprived, and frustrated, I had no choice but to surrender not only this career situation but my entire life over to God. I had to accept that I was not in control. And that I never had been. I needed God to show me what He had in store for

me since I felt certain it wasn't the next step on that corporate ladder anymore.

## **If You're on the Wrong Ladder, It's Time to Step Off**

We all know the higher we climb, the greater the risk. However, climbing down can be just as hard, if not harder, than the ascent. One wrong step and we're doomed ... or at least that's what FOMO tells us.

What if we take a misstep on our way down?

What if we regret abandoning our climb?

What if all our hard work was for nothing?

Striving was the name of the game I had been playing for years. I'd given everything to climbing that corporate ladder, and I admit ... I was afraid to give it up. The thought of letting go of my career gave me butterflies.

I would snuggle Remi as she slept and try to think of every alternative way to make a living.

Maybe I could launch a coaching business?

Perhaps I could become a public speaker?

Should I start a stationery company?

Yes, it may all seem ridiculous now, but I considered *every* angle as a possible solution. Still, each idea felt like I was trying to step into

a place where I didn't belong. It soon became clear that the next step on my old ladder was no longer meant to be *my* next step.

I was tired of being strapped to this unstable ladder, defining my worth by worldly success, accomplishments, and accolades. I had been hanging on by a thread for a long time, and the thread had finally broken.

With sudden clarity, I could see that each next step was nothing more than an illusion of security. How had I fallen for the scheme?

FOMO had been *keeping me stuck* in the middle of something I was never supposed to be a part of in the first place. In fact, FOMO had not only led me to climb the wrong ladder; it had stopped me from stepping off the ladder and stepping into the abundant life the Bible tells us about.

*If you're on the wrong ladder, there is never a better time to step off than now.*

It was time to stop the striving. It was time to shift perspective.

Jesus says in John 10:10 that the thief wants to “steal and kill and destroy” but Jesus came so that we “may have life and have it abundantly.” Have you ever become so busy trying to secure the next best thing that you end up missing out on the moment God has you in? I had become so afraid of “missing out” on achieving MORE, MORE, MORE that I had actually been missing out on the blessings God had already given me.

## Letting Go of the Way of the World

A call to my husband, Will, solidified my decision. It was time to descend this corporate ladder once and for all. He stood by me, assuring me that we would navigate this transition together and that everything would be okay—even if it meant significant sacrifices.

A few days after this conversation (and a lot of prayer), I was losing hope again. Discouraged, angry, and exhausted, I prayed for God to help me through the struggle, to give me clarity about next steps, and to help me surrender fully to His will for my life.

Then, the Bible's story of David inspired me to believe I didn't have to figure this all out on my own. Are you familiar with this story?

God told the prophet Samuel to anoint the next king: one of Jesse's sons. So Samuel went to find this new king. After seeing all the other brothers, Samuel asked if there were any sons he hadn't seen yet. Jesse was reluctant to admit he had another son, as even he didn't believe in David. But despite no one thinking David was the right man for the job, Samuel discovered this outcast son tending the sheep, exactly where God had placed him.

Let's take a look at how David was discovered:

So he asked Jesse, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse answered.

"He is tending the sheep."

Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives."

So he sent for him and had him brought in.  
He was glowing with health and had a fine appearance and handsome features.

Then the LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; this is the one.” (1 Samuel 16:11–12 NIV)

Do you see what happened here? God sought out a lowly shepherd boy, a boy who was *not* focused on climbing the wrong “ladder,” a boy who was not pouring all his energy into achieving accolades and accomplishments. Then, God (not David) made a way for this obedient servant to be anointed as the future king.

If God made a way for David, He can do surprising things in our lives too. Once I realized the real meaning of this familiar story, I cried out to God and said, “Please send someone to find me like you sent Samuel to find David!”

We’ve all heard that truth is stranger than fiction. Well, in my case, this age-old saying certainly held up, because I couldn’t possibly make up what happened next.

As I was holding ten-week-old Remi Claire in my kitchen and catching up on emails, I found an unexpected message in my inbox. It had arrived around the same time I’d prayed for God to send someone to find me. The subject line was titled “Visiting Rogers,” and guess who it was from? Ben from the digital ministry company! (Remember him?)

Turns out, he was planning to visit my hometown and suggested we meet at my favorite local coffee shop. See? If God has done it before, He can do it again.

When the time came to connect in person, Ben and I spent extensive time chatting about how FOMO had prevented me from putting in my two-week notice so that I could resign from my corporate job.

“If you’re on the wrong ladder, there is never a better time to step off than now,” Ben said.

*I had become so afraid of "missing out" on achieving MORE, MORE, MORE that I had actually been missing out on the blessings God had already given me.*

I sat speechless, stunned at the way God had chosen to deliver this very clear message to me. Still, the descent is scary. The way FOMO stifles us is no joke. But I had stalled long enough. The time had come for me to step off the wrong ladder. I was ready to discover what God had prepared for me.

## **God Is Worth Selling Out To**

While facing this inner struggle, I found comfort from a strange, unforgettable dream. I was in a random house with seven door openings, but no actual doors. When I went on the hunt to find the doors that fit in these spaces, I discovered seven black doors. This is where it gets weird.

When I went to install them, they didn't fit like a typical door. I kept trying to put them in like a normal door, and they wouldn't work. The only way to install them was upside down.

After I finished installing them, I looked through one of the doors' windows. Guess what I saw.

*Remi and me holding hands in a field and reveling in the simplicity of life.*

I wasn't scrambling to come up with the next best business idea or working to the point of exhaustion to get promoted. I was living in the moment and embracing the season of motherhood that God had me in right now.

*It's impossible to miss out when our eyes are focused on God and our identity is found in Him.*

As I shared this unusual dream with my mom, she told me about Matthew 13:44, which reads: "God's kingdom is like a treasure hidden in a field for years and then accidentally found by a trespasser. The finder is ecstatic—what a find!—and proceeds to sell everything he owns to raise money and buy that field" (MSG).

Once we get a taste of the unexpected gift found in the moment that God offers us right now, everything changes for us. Sacrifices start to give us joy. Trials start to fire us up for what God must be up to. Serving others becomes our mission.

We start to see that we don't have to worry about the next big thing. We start to see that we have everything we need right now. We start to see that it's impossible to miss out when our eyes are focused on God and our identity is found in Him. We start to see that everything we have was never ours to hold onto. We start to make bold moves that the world would consider crazy or even delusional. We start to believe that each step off this ladder is one step closer to the abundant life God has waiting for us.

## **Clinging to the Promises of God**

I had exactly three weeks of maternity leave left when Ben connected me with several leaders at the digital ministry company. I had devoted YEARS of my life to serving the other company, a company that had passed me up for promotion without even having a personal conversation about it. But, once again, I was learning that God is always right on time. *I only needed to give my employer a two-week notice, and that was the exact timing in which His next step was revealed to me.*

Not only was I was offered my dream ministry position, but I wouldn't have to relocate for the job. They were giving me a REMOTE position! This wasn't a role I could do with Remi at home, but it was a role that would allow me to maximize my time with her and still have a career. We had a daycare ten minutes down the road with a spot secured for her. I would drop her off around nine o'clock in the morning, and Will's mom would get her after lunch and watch her until I got off work later that afternoon.

Even though the timing was a God thing and the logistics with Remi were falling into place nicely, Will and I still had a tough decision to make for our family. In full transparency, FOMO hit hard. Would I continue climbing that old career ladder? Or could I bravely step into the new position God was calling me to?

After giving me the remote job offer, the hiring manager said, “All you have to do is decide if you are called or not. Don’t let the details stop you. If you are called, say yes and trust that God will work everything else out.”

While the risks were many, Will and I decided to make a leap of faith. We were ready to trust that God had something planned for our family on the other side of my corporate climb. We knew there was more to life than the way I had been living, and we were ready to see what God was going to do through this next step in my faith journey.

It turns out that what often looks like a step back can really be a giant hop forward. Matthew 6:33 says, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (NIV).

God promises not to fail us. He tells us again and again that we can step away from FEAR and put our FAITH in Him:

- He will be with us wherever we go (Joshua 1:9).
- He has plans for us (Jeremiah 29:11).
- He will renew our strength (Isaiah 40:31).
- He has made a way to spend eternity with us (John 4:14).
- He will bless our obedience to Him (Psalm 1:1–3).
- He gives us comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

- He has tomorrow taken care of (Matthew 6:25–34).
- He will give us rest (Matthew 11:28).
- He is preparing a place for us and will come back for us (John 14:2–3).
- He will use every circumstance and situation in our lives for His good (Romans 8:28).
- He gives us peace that often doesn't make sense because of what we're walking through (Philippians 4:6–7).
- He will fight for us (Exodus 14:14).

God will keep His word and lead us to experience fulfillment right NOW. Here's to our journey of discovering what it really means to choose NOW over NEXT.




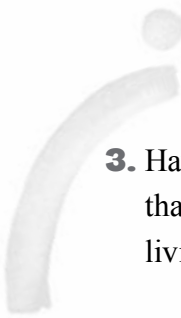
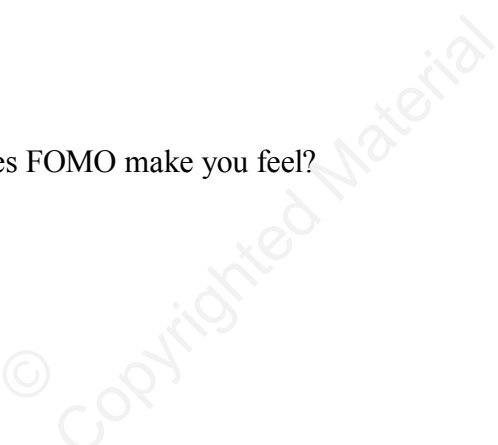
# Embrace the Now

1. What does FOMO mean to you?

2. How does FOMO make you feel?



3. Have you had a moment when you said to yourself that there has to be more to life than the way you're living today?



**4.** Have you ever become so busy trying to secure a certain life that you end up missing out on experiencing the moment you're in?



**5.** How would you describe the “ladder” you’ve been climbing and the next rung you’ve been striving to step onto?

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**6.** What do you believe God will do in your life NOW?

