

**DISTRACTED**



# DISTRACTED

Capture Your Purpose  
Rediscover Your Joy

**BOB GOFF**



NELSON  
BOOKS

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*This book is dedicated to Sweet Maria Goff  
and our expanding family.*

*Thank you Lindsey, Jon, Richard, Ashley, Adam, and  
Kaitlyn, you are my teachers and I'm your biggest fan.  
Most of what I have ever written down in a book I learned  
from simply watching you live your beautiful lives.  
G. K. Chesterton once told his friends, "I'm sorry for  
the long letter, I didn't have time to write a short one."  
This book is the long letter you have helped me write to  
myself about the kind of undistracted life I strive to have.  
The model of your lives is pointing the way for me.*

---

*I also dedicate these words to my friend Bill Lokey, who gave  
away extravagant love to me while fighting a courageous battle  
against cancer. Thank you for teaching me not to be fearful  
or distracted about what happens after this life ends . . . and  
for the promise that arriving in heaven will be simply like  
stepping from the boat to the dock. Welcome ashore, Bill.*

---

*And finally, to everyone who forgot about the important work  
they were called to do because they were distracted by what  
seemed more urgent, even if it wasn't. My hope is that these pages  
will help you find your way back to the big and undistracted life  
Jesus invited you to live. Be relentless in your efforts to locate  
this place; do whatever it takes to get there. Once you arrive,  
don't let anything but heaven cause you to budge from it.*



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## CHAPTER 1

# THE DESTRUCTION OF DISTRACTION

*Living on purpose is like a  
horse wearing blinders.*

A couple of years ago I traveled with a few friends to Kurdistan, a place near Iran's border. We had started a school in the region and were building a hospital and housing for refugees. One morning we got up early and went to the top of a mountain that divided Iraq and Iran. It was a rocky and nondescript area. I remembered from a decade ago when three Americans were taken into custody by Iranian border guards for crossing into Iran while hiking on this mountain. I understood how easy it could be to get confused about what side of a border you were on. A line on a map doesn't always translate to markings on the ground.

As I walked with my friends, we saw a sign indicating a minefield separating the two countries. *This must be the border*, I thought. I

couldn't read the language on the sign, but the skull, crossbones, and drawing of an explosion told the story pretty clearly. I decided to throw a couple of rocks into the minefield to see if anything would happen. I know, I know, it probably wasn't such a great idea, but it was the best bad idea I could come up with at the time. After ten or fifteen minutes I looked over at the landmine sign again and noticed it had been dug up. We weren't on the perimeter throwing rocks *into* the minefield; it was just as likely that we were *in* the minefield.

Be honest. From time to time we all find ourselves in dangerous places when we think we are safe. Distraction is what leads us into this kind of minefield. No matter who you are, somehow or somewhere you will cross over and find yourself in the middle of something you thought you were only adjacent to or on the edge of.

You and I need to recognize the signs that we are becoming distracted. While we might notice our minds wandering, we also need to look at the meandering nature of our activities. Rather than making decisions consistent with who God says we are, we might be acting like the person someone else wants us to be. Perhaps comparison is leading you away from yourself. Maybe it is financial pressures or deep-seated insecurities or past failures that are overly influencing your present decisions. We need to recognize these things in our lives before we can begin the courageous work of moving forward.

Try this: Take some notes for an entire day on how you are spending time between the big projects or commitments in your life. Don't just write down "I worked on writing my paper today" or "I spent the day preparing for my weekend trip." Write down all the things that distracted you from writing or preparing that day. Again, be honest: "I went to the post office. I chased the neighbor's dog out of my yard. I compared my failure with someone else's success. I ate a Pop-Tart." Keep it real and admit you had three. Distractions like these make up the minefield you are in right now, not the one you

think you are still on the perimeter of. A thousand such unnoticed distractions are getting in the way of your joy and preventing you from living with the kind of focused purpose that will produce the life you are longing for.

Don't feel bad about all the things that have been grabbing your attention. We all become distracted at some point. It is somehow built into our operating systems. We become distracted from our goals and greater purposes by our temporary circumstances. We can be distracted by each other and even away from God and what we really believe to be true. Sadly, the boatload of goodness we could bring to the world is being scuttled by the many things that carry us so far away from the dock we can no longer make the leap back to shore. We get stuck in the past, worry about the present, or get distracted by the future. We no longer lean into our lives right where we are but instead lean away from them and become individuals who bear little resemblance to the people God intended us to become.

I started a retreat center called The Oaks with some friends in Southern California and was filming a series with a fun and really creative group of people. They explained to me that they had a final closing scene in mind where they would fly a couple of cameras in by drone and capture me holding a bunch of balloons while standing on top of the sixty-foot-tall water tower on the property. All I needed to do was climb to the top. It sounded like another really dangerous idea, so we got started with the preparations right away. The water tower is on a big hill covered in waist-high brush, and we took a small road to the top with dozens of brightly colored helium balloons held out the windows.

When I got to the base of the water tower, I looked up at the dozens of rungs leading upward. This wasn't going to be easy. The wind was blowing pretty hard, and as I looked up I was completely engrossed in counting the rungs, planning my moves, and thinking

about how I could get myself and the balloons up to the top in one piece. If I fell, at least I could land on the balloons, right? I continued to stand at the base of the tower for a few long minutes, looking up and puzzling together all the details I thought would be necessary to navigate my way upward. For no particular reason, I broke from my upward stare, glanced down, and discovered a coiled rattlesnake at my feet. *Yikes!*

Had I been bitten, this would be a much better story. I wondered whether I was flexible enough to get my ankle up to my face so I could suck the venom out. I'm not going to lie; it would have been quite a power yoga move. I slowly backed away, thankful I wouldn't have to pull a hamstring to save my own life. This episode got me thinking. Sometimes we are so busy looking up and looking forward trying to figure out the next moves in our lives—or looking backward at all the places we have been—that we don't look down and figure out where we actually are.

In a sense, we have all been bitten by something just as poisonous as that rattlesnake: the massive number of distractions around us. We live much of our lives struggling for focus, unsure of how to interact with our family or friends. We fret about our popularity and our faith. We question our college majors and career choices. Sometimes married couples wonder about their choices too. *Did I pick the right person? Am I the right person? Who changed? Me? You? Both of us? And what do we do now?*

No wonder we're confused. We arrive as babies, placed in the arms of parents who are complete amateurs with no owner's manual and usually no clue how to raise us. Most of us start broke or broken, and some of us stay that way. Some strike it rich but then accumulate a distorted view of their wealth; still others never find healing in their search for wholeness. Add to this that we're following a God we can't see, for a lifetime we can't measure, to a heaven

we can't comprehend, because of grace we didn't earn. Again, is it any wonder we're all a little muddled?

In truth, we are all trying to build the airplane while flying it—figuring it out as we go. This means more off-ramps than on-ramps, more chances for confusion than certainty, and more ambiguity than clarity. In a word, much of life can leave us feeling completely, inextricably, absolutely, and totally *distracted*. When this happens, one of the first casualties is our joy.

All this vagueness plays right into the hands of darkness too. I am not prone to seeing the devil around every corner, but I am starting to see he has got a clever ploy. I don't think he wants to destroy us with an obvious, all-out frontal assault. No, I think evil wants to distract us from expressing our gifts and doing what we are meant to do. Darkness is rarely content to wound us with one decisive blow when it can injure us equally with a thousand paper cuts. Honestly, it seems like evil has been doing a pretty good job of keeping us out of the fight and entangled in the ropes of distraction.

You know those indentations they put on the sides of the highway, the ones that go *guh-guh-guh-guh-guh* if you drift out of the lane? Those are called “rumble strips.” I want this book to be like a rumble strip in your life. Listen: You are on a path. You're going places. I don't care whether you drive NASCAR or are waiting for your driver's permit; it's common to drift every once in a while. And not the cool kind of drift you see in the movies or on TikTok—the bad kind that will leave you overturned in a ditch. This book will give you a few ideas about how to yank back into your lane, refocus, get clear once again on your lasting purposes, and start living a less distracted and more joy-filled life right now. No one asks for permission to stay on the road; and you don't need permission to live your life either. Just decide right now that you are going to lean

into the rich, meaningful, beautiful, oftentimes painful life God has already given you.

We all know someone who won't pull over and ask for directions. I used to be one of them, and I think I now know why. Most of us don't want to be told what to do, even when it would be helpful to us. The fact is, we don't need more information; we need more examples. Stay close to a few people who understand how to resist distraction and direct their energy toward their most lasting purposes, and some of this intentionality will rub off on you. Imagine what could happen if you focused your attention on what really matters instead of all the things that don't. What an amazing example of love, purpose, and joy you would be to countless others. These are the things both simple lives and grand legends are made of.

Let's be honest with each other. There is a lot of second-best available to all of us. If we aren't aware of the alternatives, we won't realize we are settling for less than what is accessible to us. This book won't tell you what to think or what to do, but I hope it reminds you about who you already are. You are someone who has permission to live with an unreasonable, unthinkable, totally absurd amount of focus, purpose, joy, and fulfillment.

Here are a few questions I have for you as we begin this journey. Are you willing to do what it takes to uncover the wonder that already surrounds your life? Will you do the courageous work to identify what is distracting you from the better things? And finally, are you willing to do the difficult and selfless work of releasing the beauty you discover into the lives of others rather than keeping it for yourself?

Pulling this off will require us to put on blinders. Like a racehorse in the Kentucky Derby or a dog with a funnel around its neck after going to the vet. We need to block our view of the things that hardly matter at all, stop returning to the patterns that do not

serve our larger objectives, start recognizing what is temporary and transitory, and instead focus intensely on the things that will last forever: our faith, our families, and our purposes. When you direct your attention to these things, you will find your joy.

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If you've read any of my other books, you know I've been focused on Sweet Maria since the moment I saw her. She has captivated me for decades, and she still does. It's easy to stay undistracted when she's around. Of my countless quirks, one thing I do is sing to Sweet Maria every morning. I won't tell you what my repertoire is, but I will say that I am *horrible* at singing. Just plain awful. Think of nails-on-a-chalkboard but goofier, with more arm waving and deeper baritone. It's like a bad Disney tune sung in the key of a dog howling at the moon.

When I sing to Sweet Maria each morning, she usually groans and pulls a pillow over her head. I've told her it's part of the platinum package she got when she said yes to me. She has asked me a few times to downgrade to the aluminum or cardboard packages. You know, the ones that don't include a predawn serenade. I've told her we're all sold out. I know deep down somewhere she loves it. I keep singing my awful songs because they remind me who I am and who I love. The songs remind me first thing each day about the center of my life—our family—which is more important to me than anything except my faith. More important than the reminder, these songs are declarations of what I'm going to do about my priorities. Howling through the new verses I make up each morning, I let Sweet Maria, myself, and the world know what my plan is for the day, and then I endeavor to live it out as best I can.

My hope is that this book will help you find your song or help

you sing it a little louder if you already know it. I want my words in these pages to knock loose a couple of verses for you that are filled with love and intention and hope and purpose and Jesus. Maybe it's time for you to hum a few bars each morning about the beautiful life you have been given, the short period of time you have to live it, and the people you could impact if you let your love and creativity off the leash rather than tying it to the past.

This book isn't filled with fables. Instead, it's wall-to-wall with stories. Why? It's simple. Because Jesus told stories. In fact, Scripture says He never spoke to anyone without telling them a couple of good stories to illustrate the truths He wanted to pass along. Stories not only tell us truth but they can also point us toward living lives that are more true. Falsehoods are designed to distract us with deceit; truth, on the other hand, informs and guides us down a brave and more lasting path.

This book is not full of miscellaneous facts either. I've never had a bunch of random, disconnected facts combine into something that changed my life. These days, though, it seems like the world is full to the brim with information. We are drowning in the stuff. On average, human knowledge is doubling every thirteen months, but this deluge of information doesn't provide any more clarity about our lives. To the contrary, it sometimes feels like the facts become a smoke screen lingering between us and the clarity we truly need. Have you noticed that even when facts seem indisputable, people still find a way to spend a weird amount of time arguing about them? Culturally, I think we all sense that we're a little uptight and feisty right now.

Are you willing to accept for a moment that all this noise is a distraction? I am not suggesting that we opt for lives of ignorance. Far from it. Facts can be helpful, but rarely are they *soulful*. We don't need more facts to find the purpose and kindness and unselfishness

we long for; we need a firmly seated faith, a few good friends, and a couple of trustworthy reminders. I hope these stories help you sort out what you believe and why. I want this book to nudge you in the direction of who you are becoming rather than leave you wrapped around the axle of who you have been. Because when you and I are laser-focused and clearheaded, I promise we will find our purpose every time. Find your purpose, and you will experience more joy. The math is simple.

Remember, the delight of darkness is to amplify distraction. Maybe it's happening in your life this very moment and you don't even realize it. Distraction is very sneaky like that. The fix to all of this is as simple as it is hard. The way to beat distraction is to become captivated by something much bigger and much better, such as purpose and joy.

That's where we're headed in the pages of this book, and I want us to head that way for the rest of our lives. If you are willing to do the heavy lifting required, I promise you will trade up for something way better than what you've settled for so far. You will be replacing the distraction that robs your joy with the kind of purpose that nothing can ever take away.

Eyes forward. Buckle up. Here we go.



## CHAPTER 2

# THE KEYHOLE OF ETERNITY

*Take care of your heart and grow your mind,  
and you will live a life loaded with legacy.*

I was sitting on the doctor's examination table . . . again. My whole life I have been a pretty healthy guy. Rick would be in soon to see what was going on with my heart rate. He has been our family doctor for decades, and I have literally trusted him with my life more than once. He has sewn up deep cuts and repaired a partially severed finger on one of my kids. He was by my side a few years ago when we figured out I caught an aggressive form of malaria while traveling in Africa. On that occasion, it was even money I'd be looking down from heaven by the end of the week, but Rick helped me through that one too.

He came in and we cycled through the standard pleasantries between a patient and a primary care physician, swapping stories like buddies do. Then Rick put the stethoscope on my chest. He must have just gotten it from the freezer or something. I took a startled

breath as he leaned in and listened to my heartbeat. He asked about some of the symptoms I had been feeling, such as dizziness as soon as I stood up and shortness of breath just from going up the stairs. I mean, I am willing to confess I'm not the paragon of health, but I didn't think these symptoms were normal for the shape I was in.

Rick usually has a good poker face, but not this time. I watched as he furrowed his brow and focused his attention even more on my heartbeat. The concern I saw was unmistakable. In a hurry he brought a bunch of equipment into the room, put patches and cables on my chest, and started making recordings. The tape coming out of the machine had squiggles on it like a seismograph. Had this been a lie detector machine in disguise, he would've had enough wires attached to really get the goods on me.

After Rick was done with his bevy of tests, he looked me square in the face and said my heart wasn't beating the way it should. He rattled off some of the likely causes, and at the top of the list was that serious case of malaria. I won't go into details because I didn't fully understand all Rick said, but I knew it wasn't good news. In summary, my heart beat faster when I was sitting than some people's when they were running a marathon. It also didn't beat consistently.

Think of it this way: Your resting heart probably beats between 60 and 100 beats per minute if you're in average shape. Maybe a little slower if you're ripped and a little faster if you're not. Rather than the predictable *thump, thump, thump*, Rick recorded my heart beating rapidly and sporadically. It beat as fast as 220 beats per minute. It didn't take a medical degree to understand what could go wrong there. There's a big, long name for this condition, but the bottom line was, it didn't look like I would be breaking any records for "World's Oldest Living Person."

But I'm going to try anyway. Truth be known, I like the ring of 150 years old, which is the current age I'm aiming for. If I come

up a little short, find a way to bury me on Tom Sawyer Island at Disneyland, okay? Even if you need to sneak me through the gate in a jar. I have a season ticket, so they won't mind.

Over the next several days, Rick got me appointments with some really smart cardiac specialists to confirm his findings and drill down on the core issues. After more freezing stethoscopes, wires, beeps, and furrowed brows, these experts said the only way to get my heart beating correctly again was to stop it momentarily and restart it with a huge electric jolt. You read that right. They would have to *stop my freaking heart* to help it find a new beat.

Here's my question for you: Would you do it? Would you be willing to risk dying in order for your life to be more lasting? Would you risk everything for the chance to live your life more fully? That's the kind of reset Jesus said following Him would entail. He told His friends it would be like dying and starting all over again. He said it would take something as drastic, invasive, and complete as a do-over to be fully His—undistracted by everything else.

We can all be new creations if we want to be. The cold hard truth is most people don't. We settle for the safe and distracted life we know rather than the one God has promised is available to us. Sure, we can agree that Jesus wants us to be new creations, but if we keep doing what we've always done, we've got to admit there's nothing new about it. A total reset isn't easy, and it involves risk. Maybe an enormous tragedy or loss causes us to reset. Or a reset might be the result of making time to clear our minds in the morning. Find a new rhythm for your heart. Here is my simple suggestion: Decide in advance that you will do whatever it takes to get your heart right, and then do it—even if it will kill all previous versions of you.

You need to ask yourself what makes your heart beat in ways that make you stronger, more courageous, more giving, and more loving. Figure out what makes your heart skip a beat with joy and

what makes it miss a beat with dysfunction and distraction. Be willing to change all of it if you need to. Our hearts all beat a little differently, and I'm glad they do. Some thump fast, and others thump slow. Things that instantly blow your hair back might be a yawn for someone else. What totally bores you could totally light up someone else. What makes you weep may not cause someone else to notice. Something that is no big deal to you could fillet another to the bone. Be patient with each other when this happens. We all have a heart condition; it just shows itself in different ways. Someone who doesn't know me might make assumptions about my heart without knowing what it's actually doing. In the end, we're all looking through a keyhole at eternity as we try to figure out our lives today. Don't be distracted by how different you are from everyone else. Our hearts were meant to beat *together*, not the *same*.

If you want to dazzle heaven, stop being distracted being everyone else. Go be you. Do anything less, and the unique gift God wrapped in you will never be fully opened. Jesus said a rich relationship with the Father is only possible by having a right relationship with each other. In other words, if we say we love God but don't love the people He made, even the ones as weird and insecure and fallible as you and me, we have a heart condition we need to address. Don't keep ignoring, medicating, or being indifferent to it. If you want to find a richer faith than the one you have right now, the fix isn't more knowledge or arguments or distractions. Go be "one" with the people around you. You don't need to get in their faces to be in their lives. And don't just pursue the easy people either. If you want to move up to the graduate level class in this, find the difficult people around you and be "one" with them too. If you are thinking *yikes* about this new way of doing things, I'm right there with you, but it's a new heartbeat I want, not more of the failing one I've ended up with. Getting to a better place will require a restart.

Jesus' friends were distracted arguing about who got the big chairs next to Him in heaven. Jesus interrupted their silly argument by dropping some eternal clarity on them. He said that unless they changed and became like children, they would never enter the kingdom of God. I had been raised to think you just prayed a prayer and somehow the right combination of secret words opened up heaven's gates, but evidently there's more to it. It's a childlike faith—not a childish one—Jesus said would do the trick.

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I showed up at the hospital to reset my heart. They gave me the dreaded blue hospital gown and escorted me to a room to prep me for the procedure. (By the way, can anyone explain to me why they need your entire backside exposed for this sort of thing when everything is happening on the frontside?) It was a little drafty, and I was trying to strategize how to avoid mooning everyone who walked by. Just then, a guy with a white coat came in and said he was the person who would be stopping and restarting my heart. That's all the information I had. Think about it for a second. For all I knew, the guy could have been a painter from Sherwin-Williams who found a stethoscope on the floor and threw it around his neck. Yet I trusted him to stop my heart and restart it. This all begs the question: What amount of additional information do you need before you will trust God to fix your heart?

The doctor and his team had me climb onto the gurney and lie down on my back. They hooked me to all kinds of monitors to make sure they didn't kill me too much—only just a little—when they stopped then restarted my heart. When Dr. Sherwin-Williams (I know his name and he's an amazing guy) started checking out the shock paddles, I gotta tell you, I was a mix of absolutely terrified

and giddily excited. First, I had never done something like this, and I'm a junkie for new experiences. Second, I figured it would become a pretty boss story if I lived to tell about it. Third, if it actually worked, it would be like getting a new heart but without all the blood and scalpels and surgery for a transplant. Sure, like much of our lives, there was some amount of risk involved—but the benefits of a restart felt like a pretty good deal to me.

The doctor's assistants knocked me out with some kind of intravenous medicine, and I drifted off into a blur and then to nothingness. Before I went under, I imagined the man in the white coat rubbing a couple of paddles together, flipping on the defibrillator, and looking like Doc Brown from *Back to the Future* with a crazed look in his eyes as the machine emitted a steady, high-pitched hum. By the way, here's a fun little fact if you ever have to do this. Before they shock you, they make you take off any rings or metal jewelry because the voltage is enough to burn your skin under the metal. Also, pro tip: A weird number of my chest hairs got burned off. It's like a really violent waxing in this way.

And then I was awake! I felt like Scrooge on Christmas morning—a man with a new lease on life. I was hoping to see some Muppets singing carols to me when I opened my eyes, but instead the medical team hovered above me, checking all the monitors for my stability. When it was apparent I was in the clear, the doctor looked at me with a grin and said, "This isn't the afterlife; it worked." I was glad to hear this because I would've been disappointed to find heaven looking like a hospital room with bills and a copay. I also had banked heavily on my eternal heavenly garments having a backside. I suddenly had the heartbeat of a thirteen-year-old junior high school boy. And I still do.

In an average lifetime, we each get about 2.5 billion heartbeats. It takes a pretty strong muscle to beat this many times to send

blood and oxygen from your toes to your ears. If you have ever squeezed a tennis ball, that's about how much effort one pump takes to give us life. What I'm saying is: It's not easy to be your heart, so take care of it, okay? Do this with your faith and also your relationships. Take care of them. Keep track of the stress you have subjected yourself to, and for Pete's sake, take care of your one amazing and irreplaceable body. We want to keep you around for a while.

My heart has a new rhythm now. It beats slow and strong. What about yours? Is your heart racing as you strive for things that won't last? Are you constantly distracted by the unimportant? Are you living in fear? After this procedure, the doctor said the best thing I could do for my heart is to not stress it out. Maybe that's good advice for you too. Our hearts are all different, but they can beat together even if they beat differently. Do whatever it takes to get there, even if it's a bit of a shock.

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For the last several years, I've been telling myself that I want to be the guy who's available. That's why I put my cell phone number in the back of more than a million of my books. From the outside looking in, that probably looks like a move that would wreck any kind of productivity in my life. That's true, I suppose, if you're only trying to live an efficient, productive life. But I'm not, and here's why. We will be known for our opinions but remembered for the love we gave to everyone around us. If I have my head down over a project and can't be bothered to shift focus, I'll miss a good chance to show love and grace to the person next to me—and that's not the life I want to live. Receiving a truly ridiculous number of telephone calls each day is a great reminder of who I want to be. These don't

feel like interruptions; they are reminders. What are you doing to remind yourself of who you want to be?

This availability has taken a fun new turn in the last couple of years. I started coaching some amazing people to help them navigate big things they want to accomplish for themselves, their families, their careers, and their faith. I have calls all week long with these new friends. Sure, it blows up my schedule pretty much every day to have these meetups on the calendar, but it also helps me fulfill my dream of being unreasonably available. That's my jam; it's my one solo hit; it's the etching on my life and will probably be on my headstone too. "Here lies Bob Goff; he was always available (but not now)." What do you want to be on yours? "Here lies [insert your name] who lived a distracted life"? If this has a ring of truth to it for you, the good news is that you have the power to change the epitaph.

One of the most important things I do after these coaching calls is to take notes on the conversation. At the end of each call I spend a solid five minutes reflecting on what we said and filling in the missing pieces I hadn't jotted down. Why? Because if I don't, a distraction is almost certain to wipe out any gains I've made. The ways we all process the conversations we have can become windows into our own important purposes. Writing notes is a great way to avoid distractions, not just because they help us remember things that resonated with us but also because they help us curate our points of view.

Take notes while you read this or any other book. Write down how you are going to apply the parts that make sense to you. If you don't net those butterflies immediately, I promise they will fly away. Do this, then study and refine those notes, and you will find connections between the ideas you have scribbled down in the middle of the conversation and ones you had in other conversations. You will capture meaningful, partially developed, and applicable ideas

you can incorporate into your life. As you use what you have written down, they will create a feedback loop as they evolve into fuller, more complete ideas. If you don't take the time to capture and process your interior world, you will miss the opportunity to discover something bigger and more beautiful in your heart.

Many of the people who have brought a great deal of understanding and beauty to the world were notetakers. Marcus Aurelius, Beethoven, Lewis and Clark, Mark Twain . . . You name a person who was a standout in history, art, literature, or culture, and I bet you've just identified a notetaker. Benjamin Franklin wasn't a particularly virtuous guy, but he tracked a list of thirteen virtues, including notes on how he lived them out every day. You may not want to keep score of your character, but I am certain you will benefit from keeping track of it.

George Lucas, the famous moviemaker, wrote the script for *Star Wars* while also scoring *American Graffiti*. In those days of the industry, the way to locate a scene was to reference the roll of film it was on and the dialogue number within that roll of film. Someone asked George Lucas about a scene in *American Graffiti* that was on roll two, dialogue two. George wrote down in his notes "R2D2." I kid you not. He was spinning the puzzle piece in his mind for a lovable droid, took what would have been a completely unrelated written note, and . . . the rest is history. His note-taking became a way of harnessing and curating his creativity. It can do the same for you too.

Paul wrote a letter to his friends at a place called Corinth. He said that to him, their lives were just like letters from God to the world. He said they weren't a bunch of words carved into stone, but they were written on his and other people's hearts.<sup>1</sup> If you'll do the work, taking note of ideas and truths and thoughts that matter to you, you will put yourself in places to impact people in deep and inexplicable ways you couldn't have imagined. If you think of your

life as a book that's being written, start taking better notes. It will become a masterpiece one sentence at a time.

Socrates said an unexamined life isn't worth living. I don't agree that such a life is not worth living, but I would concede we are prone to forgetting about self-reflection. If you have young kids or a stressful job, you especially know how hard life can be. Some days you crash into bed exhausted, just to get up and do it again . . . and again . . . and again. String together enough days like that, and you'll look up someday wondering where the years have gone. Don't get sucked into that trap. Write down all of the lessons you learned from each day. A life without reflection is like a vapor.

James, the brother of Jesus, said in one of his letters that none of us knows what will happen tomorrow. He said our lives are like a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes.<sup>2</sup> I have seen this happen, and you have too. My favorite time to write and reflect is in the early morning. The dew is on the grass, and often there's a hint of fog in the air that collected overnight. Then each morning the dew melts away, the fog lifts, and the day begins. Taking good notes is a life hack for keeping your experiences and potential revelations from evaporating before your very eyes. The trick is to write down what you learn on the adventure so it doesn't go missing later.

There are twenty-five hundred creatures on earth known as "one-day insects." By contrast, one of the longest-living animals on earth is a type of deep-sea sponge that could be more than eleven thousand years old. If we lived that long, we would probably look like a bunch of sponges too. Most people are living like one-day insects, but we need to be a little more spongy by doing things that will last. I will say, though, don't throw shade at the one-day insects either. It'd be good to borrow some of their worldview because, like James said, we don't know what tomorrow will bring.

There is even one species of jellyfish that doesn't technically

die at all. Get this: As soon as this kind of jellyfish gets really old, it reverts back to being a young jellyfish so it can grow up all over again. I want to be that kind of person, but holding on to the wisdom I've collected while returning to a childlike faith. Kind of like Benjamin Button, except I don't want to start out really old and get young; I want to start really young and grow wise. I want to pair the wisdom I gather over time with a greater accumulation of a childlike faith. How about you? If you're on board with this kind of life approach, what could you do to find your way back to a more innocent, engaged, and less distracted version of yourself?

Here's a truth you can take to the bank no matter how long you live: The clarity of purpose, undistracted energy, selfless love, and unselfish pursuits you bring to the world will be your legacy. Everything else will look like a distraction by comparison.