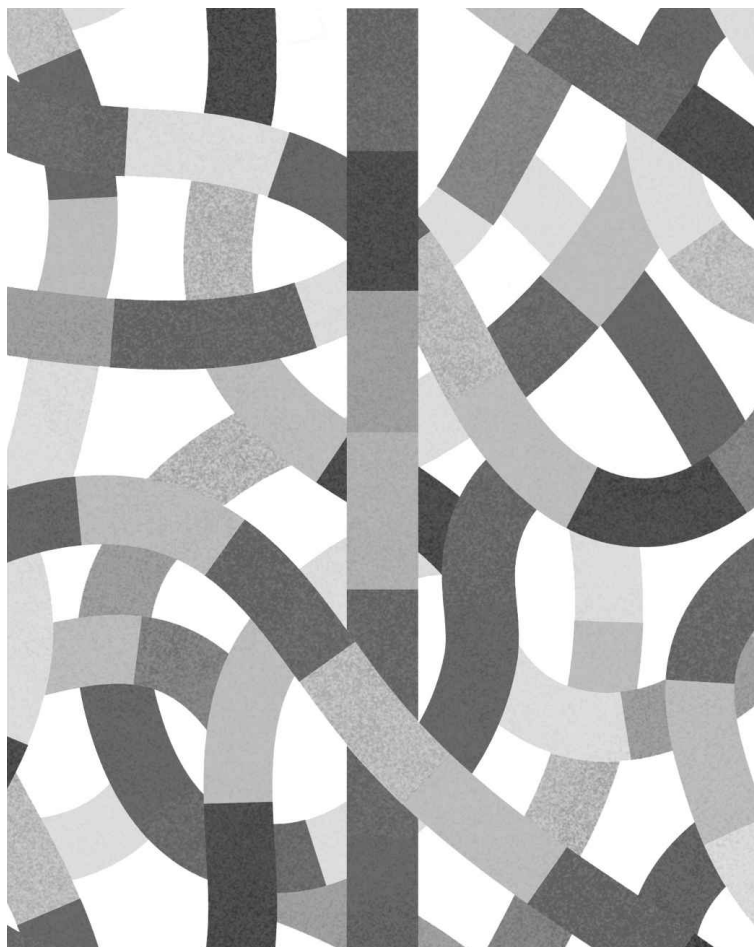


**HOSANNA WONG**



# **Uncomplicate It**

**Permission to Enjoy God in Your Unique Way**



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*Uncomplicate It*

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*To the over one thousand people who vulnerably shared your stories with me and the personal and unique ways that you enjoy God. You have transformed my life and uncomplicated how I see life with God for forever. Thank you. Here's to a thousand conversations and counting . . .*



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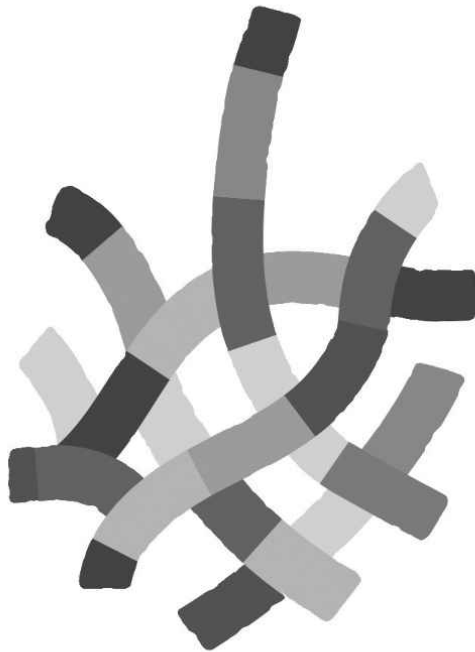
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Part 1

# This Is Your Permission Slip





# Am I for Real?

## **“I am a fake.”**

I will never forget when he said it. The doors of the bus had closed beside us, and the rumblings of its engine faded away as we stood there staring at each other. Bustling street sounds surrounded us—cars honking, kids being let out of school—and yet it all seemed like muffled white noise in the background of that Twilight Zone moment of my childhood. I felt frozen. We both began to well up with tears.

In this moment, I am in high school. I am wearing a Superman t-shirt, and my hair is twisted in two side buns like Princess Leia, because clearly, I am the epitome of fashion and cool.

Just kidding. I was not cool. And yet this boy liked me. I was on top of the world believing he would even consider a girl like me. I thought he was the coolest. I thought he, his family, and his church were everything I wanted to be.

He came from a family of pastors and said he would one day be a pastor too. He sang and played guitar on the church

## PART 1: This Is Your Permission Slip

worship team—I loved that part of the service! All his brothers and sisters played some sort of instrument, sang, spoke, or led at his church. His parents were leaders in multiple outreaches and well known in the community. And they seemed to know God in ways I had never imagined. They expressed their worship to God in ways I had never seen before. They had a faith that seemed unshakable. They had a depth I longed to have. They held prayer events for hours into the night. They were spiritual athletes—gold-medal Olympians in the games of godliness.

I wanted to *be* them.

It wasn't a secret that they did not approve of us dating. I did not come from a family with a background like theirs, and they would remind me of it. My dad had battled addiction for over fifteen years. After he came to know God, every part of his interior and exterior life changed. He started an outdoor outreach to our friends who were living without homes and battling addiction, and that is where he would raise us kids.

I loved our friends and the family we made on the streets, and today, I am so thankful for how I was raised. But back then, I knew my family was different from other families, and certainly our “church” was different from other churches. The simple story of a God who loves, redeems, and restores . . . *beautiful*. But spending two or three days a week outside—amid brick buildings wrapped in graffiti and trimmed with trails of trash and torn-apart tents, the scorching hot San Francisco city cement, and people bringing their beer, dirty needles, and multiple girlfriends to listen to the message? Maybe not everyone's perfect picture of church. *I get it*. But I wanted this boy's family to feel like I could learn to be more like *them*. Specifically, I wanted to impress his parents. I so badly wanted them to accept me. And I wanted them to teach me everything I needed to know.

When they'd ask me why I didn't do certain things in

## Am I for Real?

worship, I would say that I wanted to and asked if they could explain it to me.

When they'd ask me questions about the Bible, I'd feel like I was failing at a critical quiz and would say that I didn't know, but wanted to know, and asked how I could learn.

I had questions. I needed things explained. I wanted to know more than the simple stories of God I learned on the streets at my outdoor church; I wanted to know the complex stuff. I wanted to know the *real* church stuff. I wanted to know God as much as they knew God. I wanted to experience God in *their way*, which I believed was the *right way*. And also . . . I *really* wanted to date this guy.

But I struggled with not feeling good enough. Not good enough to date this boy. Not good enough to be accepted by his family, his group of friends, or his church. And I did all I could to try to earn a status of faith that would deem me worthy.

Which is why I was so surprised when his fingers started to unwind from mine, when he pulled his hand back and said he needed to end things between us. He said he had no choice. His family did not approve. It's not like we were serious or even officially dating. But my high school self (in all my glorious fashion trends) was tender and deeply disappointed.

Standing at that bus stop, I managed to ask shakily, "Why am I not good enough? I'm doing all I can. What can I do better? I'm going to all the events. I'm reading all the devotions. I'm doing all the things you and your family are telling me to do. *What more can I do?*"

He started tearing up. I had never seen this side of him before.

And then he said it.

"I am a fake."

He may have said more words that I missed in my utter

## PART 1: This Is Your Permission Slip

blinking out, but when I mentally came to, small puddles of my tears had already formed shapes on the sidewalk.

“None of this is real to me,” he continued. “I am faking all of it. I don’t know who I am. I don’t even believe any of this. I don’t feel close to God. I don’t know if anyone actually does. I’m just doing what I think I’m supposed to do. I’m just doing what other people do. I just know how to pretend. I am just faking it.”

The bus that had left our corner was now swallowed in a puff of exhaust. It moved on, hopefully to pick up people in the distance who knew where they were going. Unlike the two of us.

That was a line-in-the-sand moment for me.

---

I had never—*ever*—imagined that some people might be faking a relationship with God.

I had never conceived of the possibility that some people might just be going through the motions they were taught in church but not actually experiencing anything real.

And here I was, feeling *not enough* for not doing what other people were doing. I was seeing how other people experienced God, and worshiped God, yet I felt like I was on the outside looking in. I felt moronic every time I asked questions about things I didn’t understand and was left feeling less-than for even asking.

And now the truth was revealed.

For some people, it wasn’t real at all. Some were putting on a spiritual show.

To be fair to this boy, we were both still in high school. (I hope he’s somewhere out in the world, doing well and totally crushing it.) And to be fair to his family and his church, I have no idea about their personal relationships with God, and I did not feel like he was speaking on behalf of everyone. Just himself.

## Am I for Real?

But the impact of that conversation was great. Though I was crushed by my crush, that was no longer my greatest concern. As he walked away and the next bus arrived, I stepped into that capsule of strangers—and as I made my way to the back, my mind was running like a treadmill on high speed. As the bus headed to my side of the city (more rough around the edges and miles from where he lived), I looked out the dirty window and asked myself these questions: *How can I tell if some people are real or fake? How do I know if they really know God? How can I be sure that it's real for them?*

But by the time the bus reached my side of town, my thoughts had arrived somewhere else as well. Somewhere more vulnerable. Somewhere far more personal.

My question became: *How can I be sure this is real for me?*

## This One Thing

I have spent years of my life trying to answer that one question—which has led to a long line of many more questions waiting to be answered.

How can I know God for real . . . *without any ounce of faking it?*

How can I stop feeling so overwhelmed by all these unrealistic expectations? How can I stop feeling like I'm always letting God, myself, and everyone else down?

How can I enjoy God *and* enjoy my life?

How can I make sure I don't miss out on the life God has for me?

Is it possible for my time with Him to feel less like an obligation and more like a joy?

How can I stop comparing my relationship with God to other people's relationships with God?

Is there really only *one right way* to experience God?

## PART 1: This Is Your Permission Slip

What if that *one right way* doesn't work for me?

Why does something so critical have to feel so *complicated*?

My guess is that if you're holding this book, you have similar questions.

And here is the freeing truth:

Your relationship with God does not have to look like anyone else's relationship with God.

*Exhale.*

*What?*

It's true.

I wish I had known that sooner.

I wish I'd never compared my connection to God to anyone else's connection to God. I wish I hadn't spent years of my life thinking that I had to spend time with God in the exact same way I saw other people spending time with Him. Or that the way I talked to Him, worshiped Him, or enjoyed Him had to look one precise and pristine way . . . *or else*.

**Your relationship with God does not have to look like anyone else's relationship with God.**

I wish I had known earlier that the freedom, the peace, and the joy I was searching for would not come through looking like a specific kind of Christian or achieving a certain status in the church or in my life. But that it would come only through a true connection to God Himself. The Creator-of-the-universe-who-loved-us-so-much-He-sent-His-one-and-only-Son-Jesus-to-die-for-us God. I wish I'd known how very possible it was to have a real connection with Him and that that connection could be deeply personal. That it would be specific to me and God. And that it would involve my unique personality and quirks—which He intentionally created—plus

## Am I for Real?

my chaotic neighborhood, complex relationships, and colorful life that He'd placed me in.

Maybe then I would not have lived weighed down by some kind of "super Christian" expectation, overwhelmed by the churchy things I felt I had to do or feeling guilty about all the ways that I was convinced I was constantly missing the mark.

That is why I have written this book.

I want you to know this: Your relationship with God? You can uncomplicate it.

This message is for anyone who has ever felt like they want to know God for real but are unsure of how to do so in real life, right now.

In your current season of life, in your real job, and with your demanding schedule. With your needy family. With your exhausting coworkers. With *your* personality, the way *you* learn, the things *you* enjoy, and the things you *don't* . . . Is there a way for *all* of us to know God? Or is that reserved for the spiritual elite? Only the extremely disciplined? Only those with prim and proper lives and perfect routines? Only those who are morning people and embody the perfect balance of extroversion and introversion? Only those with family schedules that are perfectly in sync, who never have calendar conflicts . . . *not even once in a while?*

*Is that what this must take?*

What about those of us who cannot add one more thing to the to-do list?

What about those of us who can't start one more thing we feel like we're going to fail at?

What about those of us who are juggling so many family and work responsibilities that there doesn't ever seem to be time for a minute with God?

What about the rest of us who know how to put on a show

## **PART 1: This Is Your Permission Slip**

and pretend like we are close to God, but we are in a season of our lives where we want no part of that? We are over putting on a façade. We have no desire to pretend.

What about those of us who want real peace, real purpose, and actual joy in our real lives?

There's a way for all of us too.

This book is for anyone who has ever felt like they don't fit the mold they once thought they had to. (Spoiler: Some of the things we were taught may have been wrong.)

This is for anyone who has ever felt not churchy enough for their church friends and too churchy for their unchurched friends (same).

This is for anyone who has seen movements of God and witnessed gatherings of His people but has felt like none of it seems real or relatable. As a result, maybe you don't want any part of it. Or, if it was real for *them*, and *that's* what it looked like to be real with God, then it couldn't possibly be right for you. *No way*, you're thinking. *No way could that be what it looks like to be real with God. And if it was real for them, then it couldn't possibly be right for me.*

I wrote this book with three people in mind:

First, the *curious*. You have just put your faith in Jesus. (That is the best decision you could ever make, and I would love to be your guide to help you truly know Him in a personal way!) Perhaps you want to know where to begin. You want your next steps to be clear and doable. This is for you.

Second, the *cautious*. You once felt connected to God, but you no longer do. You're not sure where to start or how to restart. You're not sure if it's possible to ever be the old version of you. (It's not, and that's a good thing!) You're not sure how you feel about God's people. You're not sure if you want to look like or live like the other people you know who follow God. You want

## Am I for Real?

to experience the God who created the universe, but you're not sure how that will work with your personality or lifestyle. This is for you.

Third, the *committed*. You are someone who has known God most of your life, but it has been hard to find purpose or peace in your current season. Perhaps you believe that Jesus is alive but you don't feel like your own soul is. You have felt your heart grow hard and cynical. You have started feeling uncharacteristically bitter toward other people. Perhaps you feel exhausted from trying to meet other people's expectations, or perhaps you're the most exhausted just trying to meet your own—the way you thought your life *should* look at your age, the community you thought you *should* have, the faith you thought you *should* have, the perfect routines you thought you *should* follow. Why does everyone else seem to be doing this just fine, but you're not? You have moments of feeling defeated. You sometimes feel like your life is on hold and you are waiting for a more ideal season to feel truly connected and filled. You know God, but you are not in a place of enjoying Him or enjoying your life.

As it turns out, many of the expectations we put on ourselves do not come from God. And so you can safely release them—drop them right where you are.

That is the freedom we will unpack in these pages.

That is the holy uncomplicating I will guide you through.

This is not a book with more to-do lists. In fact, you will find some to-don't lists. You will find some things you absolutely no longer should do.

**Many of the expectations  
we put on ourselves do  
not come from God.**

So much of what I thought it took to have a relationship with God was wrapped up in opinions and teachings from people

## **PART 1: This Is Your Permission Slip**

who were either wired to experience God in totally different ways from me or were straight-up misrepresenting God, His character, and what it would take to know Him. I have spent most of my life trying to unpack what God *actually* says about how to know Him, enjoy Him, and live the way I've been created to live—and that's what I want to share with you.

If you and I were sitting together at a bus stop; standing in line for smoothies, coffee, or boba; or walking around a neighborhood park, and you told me you wanted to experience God for real in your real life, I wouldn't tell you whose faith yours should look like or which motions to go through to fake it. Instead, I would hand you the rest of these pages and say, "This is your permission slip. You can be who you are. You can embrace the season you're currently in. And that is the way to fully receive what God actually has for you."

Because I have *actually* discovered how this can be real for me. Throughout these pages, you will discover how this can be real for you.



CHAPTER 2

## What If I Don't Fit in a Box?

### **What does the so-called perfect follower of Jesus look like?**

What personality traits come to mind? Kind, humble, and hopeful? Somber and subdued? Positive and perky with a pearly-white smile stretching from ear to ear? Is there a specific style of clothing that comes to mind? Formal, casual, brand-new clothes, or thrifted, sustainable, perhaps hand-sewn? Do they carry out a certain set of routines, attend particular events, listen to specific music, or reshare certain posts on social media?

Do you have someone in mind?

You may despise the kind of person you are thinking of, or you may admire them so much you hope to be just like them. Growing up, I was the latter. I so badly wanted to follow God the best that I could and to do all the things a perfect follower of His would do.

I would look at the experts, authors, and influencers teaching

## **PART 1: This Is Your Permission Slip**

on all the holy habits and assume that any way they engaged with God was the gold standard. I believed I needed to match them perfectly. *If I just worship like her, read my Bible like him, and pray without ceasing like them, then I will have the ultimate connection with God!* I thought there was a box I had to fit in, a level I needed to unlock, a person I had to look like. But a question I couldn't ignore nagged at me: *What if I don't fit in their box?*

What if my personality is different from that of the person I look up to? What if the ways I rest are different from those of the leaders I listened to? What if I have a different learning style? What if I have different tastes in music, fashion, and things I find fun? What if the pace of my life is far different from hers? What if my schedule looks nothing like his? Is giving my life to God about giving up everything I like and everything I enjoy and everything that makes me . . . *me*?

Absolutely not.

Yes, God wants to help you get rid of anything that stands in the way of a relationship with Him. And we'll talk more about that later. (Spoiler: Those things don't make us more of who we really are.) But sometimes we think God wants us to change *everything* about ourselves in order to have a relationship with Him. And that could not be further from the truth.

The truth might surprise you. Let this sink in:

God created you.

God hand-made your details.

God loves your details.

God thought all your details were important in order to know Him, love Him, love others, and live a full, purposeful life.

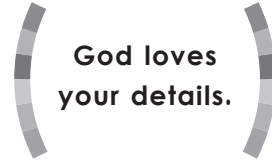
God did not invite you to be in a relationship with Him and then ask you to abandon all the details of the personality He created you with.

## What If I Don't Fit in a Box?

What if your details are, in fact, a key part of how God knew you would connect best with Him and best with others?

Do you want a real relationship with God? Do you want to fully enjoy your life?

Great news: You already have what it takes. You've been set up for success.



Your personality is a part of how God wants to connect with you. Your personal tastes are a part of how God wants you to connect with others. The ways you feel rested and find peace? The ways you have fun? The ways you feel moved, inspired, and motivated? God created those ways in you. God created your interests with your best interests in mind.

How would it change our lives to see our personalities, schedules, and passions not as roadblocks but as pathways to enjoying God? How would it change your posture to know that you are already set up for success to connect with God?

Say this out loud to yourself right now: “I am set up for success.”

Now quieter and slower for your soul to process it:

“I am set up for success.”

It's almost as if the Creator of the universe wanted to know you and created you with that very goal in mind. And 100 percent—that's what He did.

## Steer into the Skid

I was a California girl who had never once driven in snow. All my experiences in snow up to the point of meeting Guy—my then-boyfriend and now-husband—had been in the back seat of a car going up paved mountains to ski lifts and other safe, controlled environments. All to say, my nerves were shaky the

## **PART 1: This Is Your Permission Slip**

first time he drove me around his hometown of Grand Rapids, Michigan, after fresh snow had fallen late at night.

As we drove from dinner to his parents' house, I noticed how some cars slid a bit at the stop signs. I grew worried. I all but screamed when one car coming down a hill couldn't stop at the intersection—and even though every other car had the right of way, they anticipated what was happening, stayed put, and accommodated the rogue car. It skidded in a circle in the middle of the intersection but quickly recovered and continued down the road, while traffic around it proceeded to move slowly and smoothly. No accidents, shouts, or hand gestures came from the other drivers.

Guy saw my stunned face and said, "We're used to snow here. We all know how to make space for each other, go with the flow of traffic, and keep each other safe." I was amazed at the room that was made and the grace that was given to that driver. (We Californians might not be known as the *most* chill drivers ever. Just saying.)

Then I asked, "How did that car that slid not crash? How did they know what to do and recover so quickly?"

"They steered into the skid," he said, then began explaining something that was very normal to him but brand-new to me. He said that, when in a panic mode, sometimes people will try to veer the opposite way of where the car is sliding because it might feel like the best thing to do—but the truth is, you want to veer *into* the skid. This means turning your steering wheel toward the side where your rear wheels are sliding. "Go in the natural direction the car is going. That's what's best for you, your car, and the flow of traffic. That's best for safety and power."

This analogy has stayed with me. So often when I go through hard or confusing times or need direction from God, I assume I need to engage with Him in a way that is opposite from my

## What If I Don't Fit in a Box?

natural tendencies. The truth? I can steer into the skid. I *should* steer into the skid. I can veer into the natural movement of how I was created. Not only is that better for me and for the people around me, but I am not exerting energy trying to go against how I was created. Instead, I am going to unlock the best way for me to be close to God.

We might be surprised that we can steer into the skid of how we are wired, to truly encounter God. This is best for us and everyone around us.

Are you an introvert or an extrovert? Good.

Are you a late-night person or an early-morning person? Great.

Do you find peace in the outdoors or at home reading a book? Or both? Wonderful.

Do you process best in community and conversation or being alone with your thoughts? Perfect.

I will ask you more of these sorts of questions throughout the book, but I want to tell you up front: However you are made, that is on purpose. I want you to see your natural tendencies as good things. I want to help you unlock the parts of your personality that are actually pathways to encountering God. I want you to steer into the skid.



**Are you an introvert or  
an extrovert? Good.**

Looking to other people to see how they encounter God can be a beautiful thing. It can encourage you, inspire you, and show you new ways you may want to try yourself. But when our being inspired turns into rigidly trying to copy and paste their lives and become just like them, it goes from being helpful to hurtful. Teaching people a one-size-fits-all approach to connecting with God is the perfect way to create a culture of faking it.

But from the beginning of this book, we've declared that's

## **PART 1: This Is Your Permission Slip**

not what we want. We want real relationships with God. How will you find that? By being who you really are and interacting with God in your real life—with your actual schedule, with your quirky personality, and with the unique things you are wired to enjoy.

### **The Favorite Kids**

My family is a basketball family. My dad used to sing a silly, sweet song about how he and my mom met on a basketball court. Both of my parents loved to play and raised all of us kids to love it too. We listened to Golden State Warriors games on the radio and shot hoops at local parks, and my brother and I went on to play in inner-city leagues growing up.

To this day, we all love basketball. (Steph Curry, if you're reading this, we love you.)

When I was eighteen years old, my dad passed away. When he died, my sister was twenty-seven, and my little brother was twelve. The grief was different for each of us, and so was the healing. The memories we replay are also different. Why? Because our relationships were different. We had different perspectives, different personalities, and different things that brought each of us closer to our dad.

I know my dad is not here to defend himself, but I am going to shoot my shot and go on record to guess that all three of us were his favorite.

My sister was his first kid. She had a special place in his heart. She was his favorite to play music with. They both played guitar, and she also played piano, and they would sing in our living room or sing loudly on the streets of our outdoor church, worshipping God together. My sister was from my dad's previous marriage, and he didn't even meet my mom until my sister was

## What If I Don't Fit in a Box?

seven. She and my dad had a special bond because of those years—they had overcome a lot together. And as they worshiped and declared the faithfulness of God together, their connection was filled with so much history and so much power.

My brother was my dad's only son. He had a special place in my dad's heart. My dad would cheer loudly as my brother played tee-ball growing up, jumping up and down and screaming obnoxiously as my brother ran the bases. Of course, my brother would soon learn basketball, the family sport. He was my dad's favorite to throw balls to, whether teaching him how to hit them with a bat or shoot them in a basket. He was the kid living at home when my dad passed away, and he'd been the one who helped my mom take care of my dad in his final days. They will always have a special bond because of that.

I'm my dad's middle child. I had a special place in his heart. Though he was known to many as a powerful man of God, my friends and I knew him as the funniest guy in the room. I think I was his favorite to make jokes with. I understood his humor. We would give each other glances across a busy room and know exactly what the other was thinking. And no matter what errands or house chores we were doing, we were constantly making jokes, singing songs, and playing games, often crying laughing at ourselves. Through financial hard times, losses, and eventually my dad's death from cancer, I can't say we had the easiest life. But we always found a way to have some happy in the middle of it. We had our own special bond too.

So how can *you* have a real relationship with God, your loving Father?

I promise you this: It won't look exactly like mine does. And that is a good thing.

This is not a book about how to have a one-size-fits-all relationship with God.

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God wants a personal, authentic, one-on-one relationship with you. This relationship will be different from your siblings', your spouse's, your friends', or that one person's on social media. And that's good! God is not "putting up" with your personality or "giving you grace" for what brings you true joy. No, this is His perfect plan. This is what God thought would be fun for you and for Him.

**Why would God create us differently if He ultimately wanted us all to connect with Him in the exact same way?**

Why would God create us differently if He ultimately wanted us all to connect with Him in the exact same way?

As it turns out, He doesn't want us to be the same. He wants real relationships with each of His kids.

## **One Thousand Favorite Kids**

I have been on a journey the past few years of unlocking the various ways that people experience God. That journey is why you're holding this book today. Through sixteen years of traveling and teaching at churches, prisons, outreach events, conferences, and conventions around the world, I have found that no one person who has a real and vibrant relationship with God has the exact same one as someone else.

Why?

Because one person is a single mom with three kids.

One person is a college athlete with practice six days a week.

One married couple has endured job changes for what seems like forever, so their schedules are always changing. One woman just lost her husband to cancer and feels like she is starting over in every area of her life. One college student just

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lost both parents in an accident and is now taking care of her two younger siblings.

One recording artist is touring around the country, and his schedule feels out of control and without routines he used to have. One couple just sent their youngest off to college, and at the dawn of their empty-nesting era, they are learning who they are and how to connect with God, and each other, again.

The answer is not for all of us to fit into one glorious God-box. The answer is not for all of us to have the same schedule and life plan, nor is it to live weighed down by guilt and shame over not having the schedule we once did. Not at all. The answer is to embrace the lives we have right now—to embark on journeys of engaging with God in our real lives.

What would it look like for *you* to enjoy God and enjoy your life with its real, everyday schedule?

To help you unpack this, I did something a little zany.

I asked over a thousand people from around the world about their experiences connecting with God. I asked them these two questions:

1. What has stood in the way of you connecting with God?
2. What is a unique way you have found to connect with God?

Do you know what I discovered? Over one thousand different answers from over one thousand different people. People with different schedules, different backgrounds, and different personalities.

It was incredibly emotional conducting these interviews, feeling like I was being let in on personal and profound secrets. It was heartbreaking at times to replay the audio recordings of our conversations. I would often tear up on my big blue couch

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relistening to some of the roadblocks that stood between people and God, the expectations and shame, and the ways we have greatly overcomplicated it. It was also exhilarating and encouraging beyond my wildest dreams to hear the ways people said they had bulldozed through roadblocks and discovered fun and unique ways to encounter God. Some of these ways I had never thought of before!

Throughout this book, I'm going to be sharing these findings with you. I am convinced they will encourage you just like they encouraged me, especially if you have ever felt like

- you don't have as much time as you'd like to connect with God
- you're not sure if you're doing it right
- you have far too much to do already
- you don't want to fail at one more thing
- you can't figure out how to connect with God the way other people do
- you're not connecting with God the way you used to
- you're not a morning person
- you can't focus
- you have a busy life
- you're too far from God
- you're not worthy

You are not alone. I want to name the roadblocks that have held us back. I want to introduce doable shortcuts to encounter God even in the midst of your unique season and schedule. And for the record, all of these ways come with flexibility, grace, and permission to pivot.

I pray that as you turn the pages of this book you will feel lighter, not heavier. I pray that these conversations free you,

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that some make you laugh, and that they inspire you to have your own conversations with people as well, to keep digging up ways we can all encounter God. I pray these one thousand conversations are not merely the end of a journey but instead the beginning of a thousand conversations and counting between you, me, the people in our lives, and people all over the world. I'm praying for a Great Uncomplicating—that we all discover how simple connecting with God can be. That we all unlock how we've been wonderfully wired to enjoy Him. I pray you steer into the skid of who you are and that you discover a unique, one-on-one relationship with a loving God . . . perhaps even stealing delightful insider glances at each other across a busy room that nobody notices but the two of you.